

A Magazine of Indian Thought

Vol. III No.4, 1995
Rs.20



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THE INDIAN RENAISSANCE — AN UNENDED QUEST

- MEDIA — FAR FROM FREEDOM
- EDUCATING THE MARKET VERSUS
THE MARKET OF EDUCATION
- LAI HAROBA
- LIFE OF STRIFE

HOUSE OF THE ISSUE

The 'Kang Chen' of Ladakh



The settlements in the high altitude Himalayan desert of Ladakh are located where natural springs were available to cultivate flat land. The Ladakhis have traditionally sustained themselves on the produce of this land, not withstanding scarce rainfall and a six month long winter, so harsh it makes outdoor activity impossible. These months are when the 'kang chen' (or the big house) becomes the centre of all activity for the family and their cattle.

The house, a rectangle of compacted spaces, orients its long face to where it could get the maximum sun. Although never decorated extensively, the various elements in the facade have associated significance. The south or east face has the entrance. This is auspicious. The entrance gate has three differently coloured small stones set up in honour of the gods Iha-Tho. The two storeys of the houses are demarcated by a coloured horizontal band as if to designate the levels of existence. The upper storey, like earth is for the humans, while the lower storey like the sub-earth is for the animals. The lower floor has only small openings for ventilation, but the upper floor has larger windows with prominent lintels characteristic of the local style. Stone steps lead up to the entrance which contrasts immensely with the stark blankness of the north and the west wall. However, all over the house the rounded edges and hand-plastered surfaces create a pleasant texture.

The interior of the house is compact, yet affords an open court which connects all covered spaces to the main entrance. The 'covered spaces': individual bedrooms, the living room, kitchen, prayer room, store and the dry latrine. The living room has traditionally been kept without much furniture, only a mud plastered floor which rises near the walls and the windows to serve as seats. For the rest of the house, local stone and earth and mud mortar are put together by simple tools. The walls are then crowned by a thick layered roof, supported by rough cut local timber.

In Ladakh, the family system is polyandrous. There is not only collective ownership of the house, but also common use of living spaces. For instance, in the winter, the living room fireplace becomes the focus of the entire family. The houses withstand the harsh winter well. The roof and the massive walls improve heat insulation, the earth in the wall soaks up any moisture and the cattle keep the living areas warm from below. The sun enters the house during the day and the heat is held in by wooden shutters.

In recent times Ladakhis have started using glass to keep the house warmer, but new lifestyles with furniture and gadgets have made old spaces cramped and old material undesirable.

Ripin Kalra

Transparencies: Madhu Pandit

About the cover

The problems of India are diverse and serpentine. And venomous too. Yet we can take hope from the mythological cosmic churning of snakes that revealed the pot of ambrosia, symbolising a renaissance of the spirit.



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Printed at
Excellent Printers
Okhla Industrial Estate
New Delhi

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LETTERS

Dear Editor,

I enjoyed reading the latest issue, Vol.3 No.3, *In Search of Wisdom*.

The article on environment by Ashish Kothari is excellent. I have always abhorred making the 'other' people sacrifice for the sake of the country. Whether we exploit Nature or her children it is the same. Somehow it bounces back on humanity as a whole. I also admired the environment 'kolam' (rangoli) done by Ripin Kalra. It shows imagination and insight. Congratulations.

Learning the Western Way by Helena Norberg Hodge is so good that every newspaper in India and other eastern countries should publish it. We always notice the good points of this country when a westerner exposes it. We needed a Max Mueller or a Coomaraswamy to enlighten us about our arts and literature. We needed an Annie Besant to tell us about our religion.

I have been quite appalled by the way in which the Anglicisation of our education system alienates our youngsters and makes them want to migrate west. All that Helena says about education in Ladakh applies to the rest of India. The gulf between educated and uneducated Indians are ever increasing creating a new Brahminical order, where the educated have nothing in common with the toiling masses.

It seems that 'education' concerns more and more people. Kalki wrote about education recently. *Hinduism Today* carried three articles on education. I'm really happy to see this trend. Even our so called 'alternate schools' have to finally follow the same syllabus as our mainstream institutions and fall in line, as it were.

I haven't yet read the article about Macaulay. In the forties my father attacked the Macaulay education system in a series of articles he wrote in *Kalki*.



All of you are doing wonderful work. I only wish that THE EYE was at least a bi-monthly.

Anandhi Ramachandran
'Alai Osai'
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 Madras-600041.

Dear Editor,

I read with great interest, Vol.3 No.3 of THE EYE, *In Search of Wisdom*. Of particular interest was the interview with Dr. Raghava Menon. I could imagine the words take the form of his speech. I interacted briefly with him at the India International Centre during a discussion on music. His knowledge was precise and the flow of words accompanied by his passion for the subject.

The topic chosen in this issue, viz, 'Education' needs a much wider canvas. I did not notice the name of Bertrand Russell anywhere. I'm still to go through the articles. Being a product of this education system, I have wondered several times why we take different paths. A Rukmini Sekhar is a product of this system but feels differently. And there are many others like Rukmini but not enough. Influences like people, parents, books and teachers show us different paths but it affects only some. Behavioural psychologists would analyse this

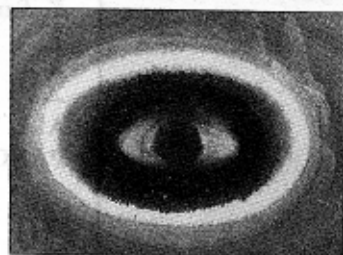
difference and offer theories. As a management student in the human resources field, I have made it my business to read people for their applicability to my organisation's needs. Corrective action in changing behaviour is attempted through 'training'. But increasingly, companies prefer to condemn or praise. Never understand people.

According to some anthropologists, regions endowed with Nature's bounty have produced thinkers and philosophers. Whereas, wherever people had to struggle, the region has produced 'successful' people in the system. Rajasthan, Gujarat, Punjab, Maharashtra etc fall in this category. Kerala and Kashmir in the first category.

You must be familiar with Arthur Koestler's views on the predicament of the human species, with specific reference to the 'brain' which man is endowed with. And how the progress of man's attempts at utilising the brain's full potential has been spasmodic and full of reverses.

The reason why I'm airing these 'arbitrary views' is to express that a little more serious insight and indepth analysis could have been attempted. Is it too romantic and nostalgic perhaps? At the same time it is important not to forget that it is the past which leads to the present.

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The Inner Eye is the centre of perception and enquiry, ever alert in the pursuit of what is true.

EDITORIAL

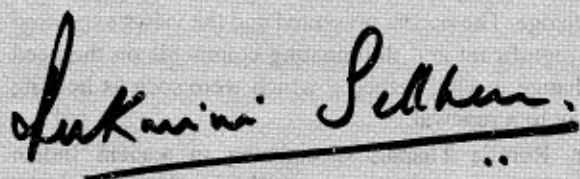
In the beginning we had a little problem with the word 'renaissance' and the appropriateness of applying it to the sub-continent of India. For the only defined renaissance we know of is that within European history - a history that progressed in linear fashion from the Dark Ages to the Age of Reason. To apply such a neat transition in a complex society such as ours would be to simplify history and negate the validity of a large number of sources that contradict the conventional basis for history writing. As Partha Chatterjee says in his book, *The Nation and its Fragments*, '...the variety of structural forms of social relations in India, the intricacy of their interconnections, the multiple layers and degrees of differentiation, the ideological forms of identity and difference, and the long course of the historical evolution of these forms through social struggle are stamped on the living beliefs and practices of the people. In its sheer vastness and intricacy, this material is incomparably richer than the received histories of Europe, a fact that the efflorescence of modern anthropology in the period after World War II has brought home to the European consciousness'.

The second point was that the renaissance, as we know it, was born out of a conflict between faith and reason. The ancient intellectual traditions of this country, did not nurture this contradiction. For religion (not the Brahminised version) but the philosophy of the Vedas and the Upanishads, the Puranas and the epics, encouraged skepticism and furious but learned debates. There was no heresy against a monolithic institution (such as that of the Church) that required a not quite willing suspension of disbelief. If renaissance denotes enlightenment, then it can be said that we were, in fact, never really out of the periphery of the Age of Reason.

Given these obstructions to the free use of the word 'renaissance' we still went ahead. Primarily because the word means re-birth or renewal. Try as we might we cannot wipe out the large chunk of our colonial history from our books and the word is here used as it was in the case of the Bengal Renaissance which was essentially born out of a colonial construct. Whether a small group of Bengal's intelligentsia can embody a national renaissance is another matter altogether.

The second surge of nationalist feelings came up during the independence struggle but suffered a dilutory end. If idealism is an essential ingredient of a re-birth or renewal then we can most definitely say that we have lost it in the mess of undefined post-independence directions and policies. There is little flowering of national creativity or spirit. We have scarce plumbed the depths of our own character or identity. We have allowed ourselves to be taken over by another kind of neo-imperialist creed. Are we finding ourselves steeped in the Age of Darkness? And further, quite unwilling to believe it? In this context, the word 'renaissance' is eminently appropriate. And it is an unended quest.

1997 is the fiftieth year of India's independence. It seems as good a time as any to ask ourselves some searching questions. And finally, I wish to add another synonym to the word 'renaissance'. And that is 'recovery.' We dedicate this issue of THE EYE to the recovery of the Indian mind.



GUEST EDITORIAL

C.B.MUTHAMMA



For many years now there has been a growing awareness that the hopes that arose with the independence of India have remained unfulfilled. The objectives enshrined in our constitution — equality and equal opportunity for all, universal education, the abolition of untouchability and of discrimination on the grounds of sex, creed, caste etc, special protection for tribal populations and their cultures, and much else have not materialised. There is also the awareness that the gulf between the actual and potential India is immense. Much thought has been given to this fact, and comparisons have been made, between India's progress (or lack of it) and the progress of many other decolonised countries, especially in Asia.

Towards the end of the eighties, the Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development of Chandigarh (C.R.R.I.D.) guided and inspired by Mr. P N Haksar, undertook an extensive enquiry into the state of the nation.

Initially it started out with a somewhat more limited objective — *Nation Building and Development Process — the Role of Communication*. That was around 1985. Unavoidably the project was delayed, but by 1988, to quote Mr. Haksar, "It was clear that while in 1985 one could have the seminar focussed on communication... with the passage of time a large number of other critical problems are emerging which require an integrated approach. There is also a need for an overriding vision of our country within which nation building, development processes and communication must take place..." As a result of this consideration a new, wider theme of study emerged — *Nation-building, Development Process and Communication — A Seminar in Search of India's Renaissance*.

The focus was thus on that 'overriding vision' spelt out as India's Renaissance. A monumental series of seminars was held, examining practically every aspect of India's national life. It brought out sector by sector, the grim reality of India's problems and the solutions envisaged by people who were qualified to speak, either by virtue of academic specialisation or by virtue of personal knowledge. The papers presented and the views expressed offer significant and illuminating comments on the need for change in vital respects, which were seen as holding the key to a renewal.

Dr. Romila Thapar, specialising in ancient Indian history, points out the ancient methods of containing the abuse of political power. She refers to groups that could

freely comment on such abuse — the bards, who maintained the genealogy of the king, and the 'renouncers' of various kinds — the mendicants, *sadhus-sufis* and such like. These commanded respect. Such 'autonomous' individuals, once a landmark of our civilisation are, she feels, an 'endangered species' in today's India. She also comments on the role of communication then and now. Then it was largely oral, but in our own time, with the growth of audio-visual means of communication, she feels that the oral method, in tandem with literacy, could again become effective.

Several of the participants comment on the way the English language is used to the detriment of a free flowering of the Indian mind. Suresh Chandra Shukla speaks of the drive of the English using intelligentsia in the direction of a variety of subordinate links with the developed world, creating a divide within the country and subordination without. He points out that the multiplicity of languages within India is not a cause of division, and that even in unilingual Bangladesh there are these divisions for the same reasons. He points out, too, that the whole of the education system is subordinated through English and the economic and political links. The overriding role of English and the effect of a western orientation is commented on by several people.

Paul Gregorios quotes Sardar Panikkar as saying that the educational system has not merely destroyed much of the creativity of the nation; it has created an elite which is so deeply enslaved by a particular way of thinking that it cannot even recognise its own bondage. Paul Gregorios, however, believes that a creative encounter with an alien culture, civilisation and values is an important requirement for a renaissance.

The question of the role of western standards, especially in technology, is dealt with by Dinesh Mohan. He talks of the dangers of making 'modern' synonymous with 'Western'. 'We end up by defining progress as the acquisition and production of 'modern' goods, modern not being what we need tomorrow, but what the west produced yesterday'. He adds that this perception of 'modernity' in an unequal society creates increased inequality by singling out the fortunate few for special treatment, especially in education at all levels. He talks of the tremendous loss of hope he has found among the young. He feels that we keep setting goals and aspirations to achieve targets set by those in the West, instead of aiming for things which are do-able and appear to be obviously for the good of the majority in this country. To free oneself of this tutelage to western technological ideas and to build an alternative society, he turns, inevitably, to the need for building new political structures and ideologies which automatically reduce

the influence of the dominant power centres around the world.

On the specific question of communication, the subject which initially engaged the attention of the organisers of the seminars, and which is envisaged as the instrument for welding the nation together and taking it forward, Mrinal Pande has critical comments to make in respect of the role of the press. Mrinal Pande spotlights some major issues where the media tends to focus on sensationalism rather than on basic problems. To the extent that the media tends to bypass the core issues plaguing the country and society and thus the vital instrument in ensuring progress is rendered ineffective. She also refers with regret to womens' rights issues which got enlarged in politics and were allowed to fizzle out, and as a result the issue got distorted. There are other distortions like the higher advertisement revenue of the English language press which caters to the more affluent sections and the economic problems of the Indian language press which actually has a wider but less affluent readership.

One of the worst features of independent India — the gradual deterioration and degradation of our tribal societies — has been very feelingly depicted by Shalina Mehta. Modern communications have had a crucial role in changing tribal perceptions which have had to conform to 'mainstream' visions of their politics and culture.

These papers reflect the general assessment of the situation that exists, by concerned and qualified people.

There is a several sense of inadequacy, and of things gone wrong. But the recognition of this situation, on such a wide front and by so many people (the selection of papers in this issue being only representative) is a positive factor. We live in an age in which, unlike in earlier stages of human history, where we have, all over the world, including in India, large communities of educated, self-aware, articulate people who understand the forces of history. They are capable of providing a collective leadership to human communities. We in India are further strengthened by the fact that in all periods of our history, we have had luminous personalities who have been sign posts for the people. The encounter with an alien culture through the colonial experience has been an advantage, highlighting things gone wrong with our traditions and things that are right. It is open to India to accept wisdom from all sources, including the West. But in these post-independence decades, what stands out is the wastage of time when so much could have been achieved, the lack of understanding by those who held power, and the missed opportunities. India needs to come out of its colonial mind-set and diffidence, innovate and build instrumentalities and institutions whether built on models from its own past or adapted from other civilisations, that can help it come out of the present morass and build a new future, ensuring a humane and just life for its people, and restoring to it its respect and dignity amongst the nations of the world.

ABOUT OUR GUEST EDITOR

When I first met Ms. Muthamma, I hardly envisaged that she and THE EYE would have such a long (and I might add, intimate) relationship. And when she invited me to Chandigarh to attend a seminar on The Search for India's Renaissance, I never thought it would turn into this issue of the magazine.

Ms. Muthamma — she's fiery and passionate when she talks about what's wrong or right about this country, caring and compassionate towards struggling causes, biting and sharp in an argument, and utterly irreverent and funny when pricking a bombast.

She calls herself a 'tribal' from Coorg, that lovely patch of paradise in Karnataka. One can often hear her bemoan the tribal situation today. In 1949, she became the first woman to enter the Civil services through the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) examinations. She opted for the foreign service and served as a diplomat for many years. She was a Carnegie Endowment Fellow at Columbia University in New York in 1963 and in 1966 she joined the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, as a Fellow. 1970 was a historic year for Indian women for that was the year that Ms. Muthamma became the first career woman ambassador to Hungary. Her diplomatic missions have taken her to France, Burma, the U.K., the U.S., Ghana, Liberia and Upper Volta and the Netherlands.

The cause of women has always been dear to her heart. In 1979 she filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court against the Ministry of External Affairs on the grounds of being discriminated on account of gender throughout her career in the foreign service and won the case. From 1980 till 1990 she was the Indian member of the Palme Commission on Disarmament and Security issues.

All along, Ms. Muthamma has been deeply concerned about the lack of dynamism in India's national affairs. Yet she has always upheld India's civilisational excellence and wishes to reinstate several of its lost values. She has spoken and written extensively on this. Her sharp mind is ever alert in the arena of political analysis and she has even attempted to offer an 'alternative' system of governance. I have enjoyed every moment of my interaction with her and am extremely grateful for her 'motherly eye' on THE EYE. We all wish her more fire and energy with every passing day!

The Editor

The Indian Renaissance

AN UNENDED QUEST

DIPANKAR DAS

The last two centuries were witness to a seminal shift in global equations. While reconciling to the impossibility of the antipodal East and West ever meeting, this very sentiment was prompted by an unprecedented predicament of close exchanges between the two. But these were unequal exchanges. The West used its overwhelming techno-military superiority to colonise the non-West, economically, politically and lastly socio-intellectually by setting the terms of discourse and the frame of reference.

With political displacement followed discursive displacement, and the non-West suddenly found its world rendered redundant — marginal to the unilinear trajectory of world progress. This led to a series of reform processes in the East. The Self Strengthening Movement, the May Fourth Movement in China, the Meiji Restoration in Japan and a tremendous flowering of thought in India, loosely termed the 'renaissance'. Underlying these disparate movements were some vital similarities, they were all premised on what Nietzsche had called 'transvaluation of values', which questioned the fundamental social mores and beliefs prevalent at the time. This pained introspection and self-awareness for the first time, rested on a sense of the self which was not ascriptive and widened to include geography and culture and a cross-section of

people traditionally considered impermeably separate.

This fertile phase of history, called the 'renaissance' involved certain elemental thrusts whose fruits and spillovers to a great extent constitute our realities today. The renaissance was India's reaction to the colonising, rationalistic West. There was much that was India specific in the response but change was a global predicament.

On hindsight, historians have broadly categorised two pathways

This fertile phase of history, called the 'renaissance' involved certain elemental thrusts whose fruits and spillovers to a great extent constitute our realities today. The renaissance was India's reaction to the colonising, rationalistic West. There was much that was India specific in the response but change was a global predicament.

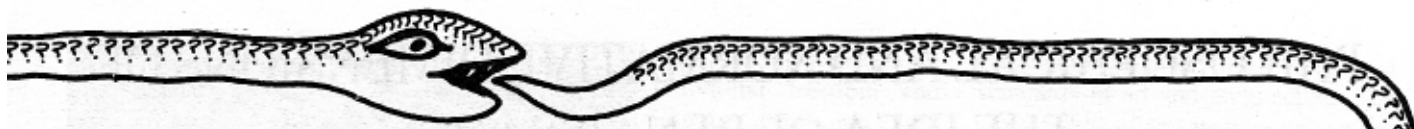
in the renaissance — the reformist and the revivalist. The former initiated by Raja Ramohun Roy, began by placing religion on a monotheistic plinth and dislodging religion from a desultory community based worldview to facilitate an individualised acceptance of it. Extending the logic, Debendranath Tagore declared reason as the arbiter of everything and Keshab

Chandra proclaimed the 'absolute freedom' of the individuated conscience.

Swami Dayanand took on a revivalist path, and began a retreat to the Vedas. But underlying these reactions was the common premise of a collective self. While Ramohun Roy sought a codification of law, freedom of the press, promotion of Indians in the military and supported liberation movements in Italy and South America which were prototypically nationalist, Dayanand was trying to lay the basis of a resurgent social community which would wrench political power if not through anything else then through the social salubrity of a mature civil society.

Comte's laws of social progress and Spencer's inevitability of progress had a deep impact on the thinkers. This idea of progress became the new superstition of modernism; the bottom line of its content involved the transformation of traditional society into a modern contractual one within the political scaffolding of a nation state. It buttressed the surge towards a rationalised world view wherein gender and caste hierarchies had to be re-negotiated in a traditionally patriarchal and ascriptive society.

But within a few decades these concerns took a back-seat and their underlying quest for collective power, by and large, got conflated into the nationalist question. From



the anti-partition agitation to 1947, the tense urge for a nation state submerged much of this debate.

With independence, a powerful state was at the nation's disposal and the reform agenda of the mid-nineteenth century got incarnated anew. Progress got translated into workable ideas of development, modernity into industrialisation and technology and hierarchy was counter-posed to universal franchise.

But just as the reform movement restricted the concerns of the Satya Sodhak Samaj's concerns to the periphery and while making thrusts towards egalitarianism, it failed to normalise it into the new ideal-types such as the *Daridranarayan* (seeing God in the poor). Notwithstanding Ramakrishna's witty aphorisms and Vivekananda's thundering eloquence, the idea of service remained, by and large, a viable expiation for the colonised elites. This problem recurred in a more glaring way once the Indian state set out on its developmental

agenda. But at the same time, the fact that the State which emerged, notwithstanding partition, was at least then not strictly defined, hard-nosed and homogenising was perhaps due to the space created for it during the renaissance.

But the contrast between the well articulated goals and ill-executed performance in things that really matter like land reforms, literacy and mortality can be seen as the gauge of the failure of the State's intervention and the gap between the rhetoric of socialism and its reality. The Community Development Project and the Panchayati Raj institutions in the fifties similarly ended up buttressing the rural elites.

Of late the liberalisation process seems to be the old seeking for growth through new means. But comparatively, a large number of pre-requisites have not been fulfilled, unlike China which took two decades of preparation before opening its markets. Agriculture which employs a vast majority of

the populace is wallowing at a growth rate of a meagre 2 per cent, while industry is growing ten times faster. The social sector is under constant threat of being disinherited by the State. But genuine political will can perhaps still make 'market plus' growth a reality.

The renaissance was an incipient awareness of a nation's destiny — mediated through religion, caste, community, language — and an attempt to chart it according to its specific needs and not received panaceas. Today the same choice looms large between a technocratic capitalism which threatens to place the developmental agenda in the market's orbit and a participatory democracy which in India is not only not the handmaiden of the market but instead feels threatened by it. ❧

Dipankar Das is a research scholar at the Centre For Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

REFORM MOVEMENTS IN CHINA

After China's disastrous experiences with western powers during the first and second Opium Wars, she embarked on a series of reforms which were geared towards strengthening China and quite aptly christened The Self-Strengthening Movement. It involved a double pronged strategy. One, to accommodate the West diplomatically and secondly, to carry on a process of strengthening the government apparatus, the army, upgrading the education system by introducing technical-scientific instruction, setting up an interpreters' college and so on.

Three gun factories were set up by Li Hung-Chang, one of the most important reformers. An arsenal and shipyard were set up at Shanghai and Foochow. The movement spanned three decades from 1860 onwards. It also included the setting up of factories. But it was a superficial attempt at modernisation and was dealt a devastating blow by the 1884-85 war with France. Marxist historians stress the intrinsic contradiction in grafting modern capitalism and industry into an agrarian — Confucian social base.

Another set of reforms were attempted between 1901-05. This

time, social reforms like liberation of women from foot-binding, were also included. The surge for reform culminated with the Intellectual Revolution of 1917-23, often called the May Fourth Movement. Liberals proclaimed it as a movement of emancipation from old thoughts, old ethics and affirmation of human rights. It saw the birth of a new literature and official adoption of the plain language. Mao described it as essentially 'an anti-imperialist and anti-feudal bourgeois democratic revolution'. ❧

PHILOSOPHICAL AND NORMATIVE DIMENSIONS OF THE IDEA OF RENAISSANCE

PAUL GREGORIOS

The task before the author here is not easy. In this brief article, he attempts to explain the manifestations of the word 'renaissance' in Europe. To use this word is to understand the transition processes from 'the dark ages' to the 'age of reason' within the Continent. But he does not stop there. He quickly turns to the implications of a renaissance on traditional cultures, that is on cultures that were dramatically impacted by colonial rule. He is not slow to focus on India (with her colonial history) and point out the reasons for the setback of a true Indian renaissance saying that she has not yet been able to find the right 'ideological-spiritual spur' to 'stir the deepest levels of her national creativity'. We need a furious but learned debate. Father Gregorios offers a prescription that is ideologically exciting and eminently implementable.

Seldom can one recognise a renaissance while in the midst of it. Usually it is several generations after the process has matured that we can point to certain historical phenomena and say — there was a renaissance at that time.

But the word itself, in this sense of a historical process of revival of arts and literature, comes from the mid-nineteenth century. As a technical term, 'renaissance' at first meant only

When we look at all these renaissances, one sees the difficulty of formulating a definition of renaissance. We can only say that it is a historical process where an ancient culture is revived in such a way as to provide a great creative impulse to the inheritors of that culture.

that transitional period in Europe between medieval Christendom and the modern period. The process began in Northern and Central Italy in the 15th century and spread to the whole of Europe. It began as a revival of European arts and letters though medieval Christendom had transmogrified Plato and Aristotle by co-opting them into a Christian theology which wove dogmatic truth out of purely mental secretions.



Heresy was part and parcel of the medieval church. Renaissance in Europe was a break from the dogma of the Church.



Musicians. China (T'ang Dynasty), A.D. 618-906. Terracotta

The Universities played a major role in the revival of classical learning. Both in the church and among the intellectuals, particularly in the Universities of Italy, the study of the Greek language and classics brought many changes. The corruption, intrigue, divisions and power struggles of the papacy made people look elsewhere for guidance and illumination.

The Italian cities and their universities played the central role in creating that unusually nebulous phenomenon called the 'renaissance'; it is at once a historical process and attitude towards life, each interacting with the other; it was generated by the break from papal authority, and from the authority of church and dogma, by the new attitudes towards property created by the Franciscans, John Wycliffe and Jan Hus, the shift from other-worldliness to this world; the search for fame rather than immortality was induced by the classics; the move from speculation and tradition to empirical investigation, the emphasis on self-cultivation rather than self-effacement, the affirmation of the body and its needs over the restraining standards of an ascetical spirituality, the striving for success and wealth rather than justice or concern for the

poor, the stress on individual freedom and human autonomy, the exaltation of human needs and aspirations as the final norm — all these played their part.

Our purpose in this paper is to isolate or identify certain common or normative features of a renaissance, which we can do only by briefly looking at other similar historical processes.

Arnold Toynbee refers to two other renaissances in Europe itself — the Carolingian Renaissance of the 8th and 9th centuries, and the Italian Renaissance, or Resurgence (*Resorgimento*) of the 19th century. One could speak

also of an Islamic Renaissance in the Abbasid Caliphate of Baghdad (1257-1517), as well as of the so called Indian Renaissance of the 18th and 19th centuries. In China one could speak of the Confucian Renaissance (T'ang dynasty in A.D. 622), or Yung Lo's Chinese Renaissance in the 15th century (Ming Dynasty).

When we look at all these renaissances, one sees the difficulty of formulating a definition of renaissance. We can only say that it is a historical process where an ancient culture is revived in such a way as to provide a great creative impulse to the inheritors of that culture.

We shall now proceed to specify certain features that seem common to these renaissances.

The Regeneration of Culture — Arts, Language and Literature

It seems obvious that behind the revival of any society which becomes aware of its past in such a way as to make it culturally creative, there is a renewal of an ancient culture, the revival of a language and a form of art.

In the case of the Italian Renaissance, clearly art and literature were the first areas to feel the impact of the rising tide of creativity. There is a

certain gradual abandoning of accepted standards in art and architecture. The Gothic style of architecture gave place to the neo-classical. The ethereal and other worldly medieval painting was replaced by a more realistic, more man-affirming, more succulent style of renaissance painting.

Art is a more revealing activity of man's inner aspirations and perceptions than philosophy or economic theory. In the Middle Ages of Europe the fine arts were preponderantly used to decorate places of worship. Painting, architecture, sculpture and music show how a society perceives reality, and that is the source of their real value. Changes in thought and literature go hand in hand with these, but appear clearly only after the arts have changed.

The Mediterranean Romanesque and the Medieval Gothic styles of architecture are both indicative of human attitudes. The Romanesque is solid and square, reflecting the immobility and traditionality of the society. The Gothic is magnificent, dynamic, angular and thrusting towards heaven with a powerful tower and roof. Europe's aspiration to be great, its asceticism as a source of spiritual power which helps it to ascend up to heaven, and that powerful ambition to climb up to the top position which goes with it, are reflected in Gothic architecture.

The transition from Romanesque to Gothic in Europe was a precursor of



A chapel of the high Renaissance: the Tempietto, Rome, S. Pietro in Montorio.

the Italian Renaissance. The round arch was replaced by the pointed one. The solid masonry of the Romanesque gave place to a soaring, dynamic thrusting cage of structures and the presence of large quantities of ribbed glass. Solidity and symmetry, characteristic of a more static society now give place to grace, height and thrust, of lightness and exultation rather than a sombre pensive piety. Intellect was now inspiring stone, thrusting it upward. It was parallel to the developments in philosophy and theology, where logical thought was thrusting upward to catch the secrets of heaven. The Cathedrals were a kind of sermon in stone, a Bible for the illiterate, lessons in theology.

This seems to be the necessary characteristic of a renaissance as it builds up — new forms of art, music and architecture, which both express people's aspirations, and also inspire those aspirations to go higher.

The picture we have traced in architecture can be found also in painting and music in the Europe of the 15th and 16th centuries. In fact, the very best in European classical painting comes from this period — Leonardo da Vinci (1442-1519), Michaelangelo (1475-1564) and Raphael (1483-1520).

The Past-Future Dialectic

A second common feature of all renaissances is the dialectic between looking back with pride to a glorious past, and a looking forward with bright hope to an equally glorious future. In Italy the 15th century renaissance and the *risorgimento* of the 19th century were both attempts to revive the golden age of the ancient Roman Empire in a contemporary context.

Toynbee says that an exclusive pre-occupation with a glorious past is counter-productive. Equally non-productive is the futurism today so rampant in the west, which has no interest in the past except as a base for extrapolation. Neither archaism nor futurism would do:

'Our enquiries into the nature of futurism and archaism have led us to the conclusion that both fail because they seek to escape from the present without rising above the mundane time-stream.'

The looking back with pride is



Raphael: Head of the nymph Galatea.

'Our enquiries into the nature of futurism and archaism have led us to the conclusion that both fail because they seek to escape from the present without rising above the mundane time-stream.'

today present in such nations as Italy, Greece, Turkey and Iran — looking back to the glorious Roman, Byzantine, Turkish and Persian empires. But a mere intensification of the studies of the past will not induce a renaissance. Modern European civilisation is a product of the renaissance of the 15th century, which did involve the revival of classical studies in Greek and Roman literature, art, music and architecture, but there was certainly more than academic or popular studies involved in the process of a renaissance.

It was the opening out of the trade routes, the improvements in navigation and warfare techniques, and the formation of the Italian city states free from the control of the Church, which, along with other factors, gave the people a bright hope and the energy to start all over again to build a brave new world.

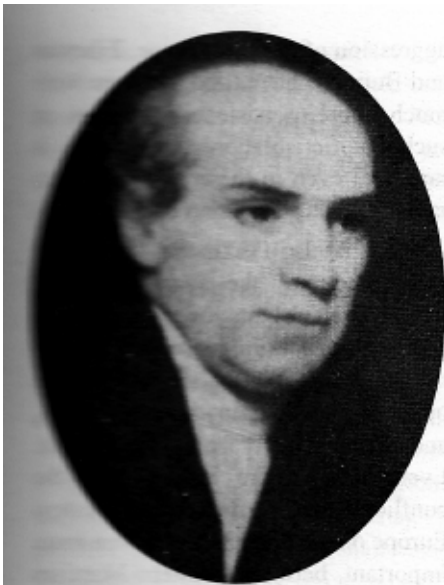
The importance of the past should however not be minimised while it is ineffective by itself, its motive power in combination with other future-oriented factors, is enormous. Only when the social and economic conditions for creating a flourishing society are present can the revival of art and the studies of the past stimulate a society to begin a genuine renaissance. If the Indian renaissance of the 19th century failed, the reason was that we were at that time imperially enslaved, and the social, economic, and other conditions for building a new society were not present.

The Literary Input and Output

In a survey of eight different renaissances, Toynbee comes to the conclusion that a common element in all of them was the revival of an ancient language, and the creation of great libraries.

From our Indian view-point, it is useful for us to consider what happened in the 18th and 19th centuries when the foundations of modern India were being laid. The debate in the British Parliament gave an admirable survey of the two options before the colonial masters.

One option is typified by William Carey, the British cobbler turned scholar-missionary. His belief, which he implemented with relentless effort and unparalleled skill, was that India could be revived only by making our Sanskrit classics available to the Indian people in their own mother tongues. The College of Fort William, which later became Presidency College of Calcutta University, was established for promoting such learning. Its curriculum of study then included Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit, in



William Carey.

addition to English; but also Bengali, Marathi, Hindustani, Telugu, Tamil and Kannada and also the Greek, Latin and English classics, as well as modern languages of Europe. William Carey was a teacher of Bengali and Sanskrit. On the side Carey collected butterflies and other biological specimens of Indian flora and fauna, and translated not only the Christian Bible but also the Hindu epics and the *Gita* into Indian languages. Carey spoke idiomatic Sanskrit fluently. He edited and published the *Ramayana* of Valmiki, in the original Sanskrit, which opened the Hindu epics and other literature to the English speaking and to other European nations — leading to many literary and philosophical revivals in 19th century Europe. The impact of these editions and translations on European philosophy and literature is a subject for another paper. Here our interest is in Carey's attitude to what was necessary for the renaissance of India. His magnum opus, *A Universal Dictionary of the Oriental Languages*, derived from the Sanskrit, of which that language is to be the groundwork, appeared in 1811. He edited the Sanskrit text of *Hitopadesa*, *Dasakumaracarita* and *Bhartrhari's* works. He also translated the Bible into Bengali, Oriya, Maghadi, Assamese, Khasi and Manipuri. His Sanskrit translation of the Bible appeared in 1811-1818, as did the Hindustani version. He also produced translations in Marathi, Punjabi, and in all the Rajasthani

dialects (Udaypuri, Jaipuri, Ujjaini, Bikaneri, and so on). He initiated the first non-English newspaper, the Bengali language *Samachar Darpan* (1818). Carey started the movement against Sati and against the abandoning of female babies to drown in the sea at Sagar, and also against slavery. He was the founder of the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India. He introduced printing and paper manufacture in India.

To summarise William Carey's option then, we could list his desire to:

- (a) promote learning in general, particularly in languages and sciences;
- (b) provide access to Indian classical literature and arts;
- (c) make possible the knowledge on non-Indian civilisations and cultures also and
- (d) help Indians know their own religious heritage, as well as other religions.

Opposed to this was another British view — that of Alexander Duff, which, according to the present writer, has prevailed in Indian higher education and stands in the way of a genuine Indian renaissance. Alexander Duff was also a British (Scottish) missionary and, in fact, the successor of Carey. He came to India in 1830, then 24 years of age. He laid the foundations of our national educational system — the British Indian Education Charter of 1853 and the 1854 Educational Despatch of Lord Halifax. Duff came to the view, shared by many western-educated Indians, that our national heritage is an obstacle to our progress in modern science and technology. He conceived western liberal education as a 'mine' that would 'undermine' the resistance of India's 'superstitious' culture. The debate in the British Parliament was about which of these two options should prevail in British policy in India. The 1835 decision, to develop higher education through English, was in public recognised as the advice of Thomas Babington Macaulay, but that advice came originally from Alexander Duff. Sardar Panikkar says:

'Macaulay believed that, once the Indian people became familiar with

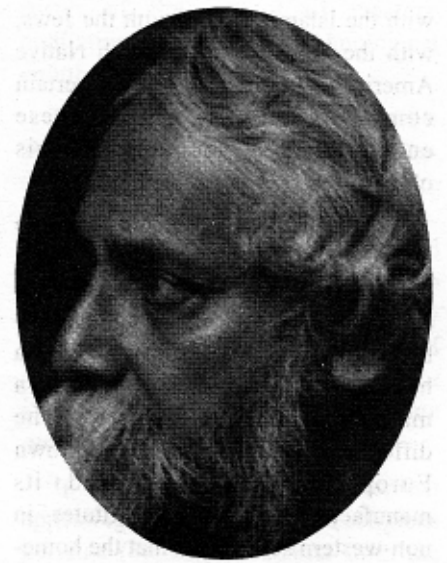
western knowledge, Hindu society would dissolve itself... In the modernization of India, this system of education played a decisive part. But what it failed to achieve was either the undermining of the Hindu religion or the dissolution of Hindu society.'

Even now we are tardy in realising, says Panikkar, how deeply our nation has been deformed and distorted by this system of education. This educational system has not merely destroyed much of the creativity of the nation; it has created an elite which is so deeply enslaved by a particular way of thinking that it cannot even recognise its own bondage. We still think that a scientific secular temper will save us. We still think of western norms as standard. And even in looking for a renaissance, we look for light from the West.

There is no doubt that in India we have today a literary output that is quite large and fairly high in quality. But this literature in Indian languages lacks the vitality of the 19th century Bengali novelists who introduced the literary form of the Novel into India, or of the Bengali poets like Tagore. Our literature largely lacks a perception of our own identity as Indians and does not encompass our varied past in such a way as to give us inspiration and hope.

The literary output that leads to a renaissance should:

- (a) give us an understanding of our



Rabindranath Tagore

past which inspires us to find a new identity for our people through creative effort

(b) give us a vision of the basic goals worth pursuing in life in literary forms that communicate at a deeper level than the discursive and

(c) create such a national unity, at the level both of the leading classes and of the languishing masses, as would lead to a resurgence of economic, social and cultural creativity.

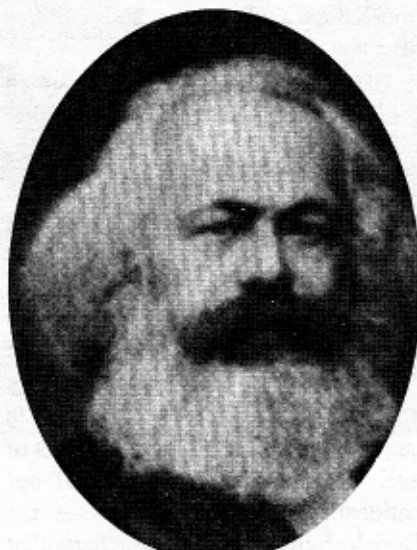
This capacity depends on the input that is behind a literary output; it is predominantly British-American thought and a little Marxist thought. We need a greater openness in the matter of literary input to other contemporary cultures — Spanish, Arabic and Chinese to cite some examples, but we need also a more powerful and creative input from our own classical past.

Every renaissance has, it seems, an external stimulus, usually the experience of being overrun by alien peoples or at least the fear of the enemy at the doors, followed by national victory. Toynbee is, of course, very eloquent at this point. The 'contact between civilisations in space' can have either disastrous consequences for one or both, or can prove stimulating to either. In his survey of encounters between mutually contemporary civilisations, Toynbee devotes major space to the contacts of the modern West with Russia, with Orthodox Christendom, with the Hindu world, with the Islamic world, with the Jews, with the Far Eastern and with Native American cultures, and finds certain common features in all these encounters. I summarise his observations:

(1) The contacts are mainly 'middle class', and the western middle class is the bearer of so-called 'modernity' to the middle class of other cultures, who become 'an artificial substitute for a home-grown middle class — a manufactured intelligentsia.' The difference between the home-grown European middle-class and its manufactured artificial substitutes in non-western societies is that the home-grown variety is at home in its own

cultures, whereas the manufactured varieties are not. The latter are exotic — 'products and symptoms, not of natural growth, but of their own societies' discomfiture in collisions with an alien modern West. They were symbols, not of strength but of weakness'. Therefore these non-western imitation middle classes have a love-hate relationship to the original (*odi et amo*), which was itself a symptom, 'the measure of its foreboding of its inability to emulate western middle class achievement'. Toynbee cites as an example, our own 'Sikh Khalsa that had been called into being by a decision to fight the Mughal ascendancy with its own weapons'.

(2) It was usually after the over-running of one civilisation has ebbed



Karl Marx

and flowed, or advanced and receded, that the major influences on each other begin to take place. But first reaction is to take on some of the more aggressive characteristics of the aggressor in order to repel him — as happened to our Sikhs and Marathas in reaction to the Mughal invasions. This can take the form of military aggressiveness, or alternatively, spiritual, intellectual and ideological aggression, and more often, a combination of the two. But the best learning from each other takes place after the initial aggression and counter aggression have somewhat abated.

(3) There is also the possibility of a pacific and isolationist response to aggression. This was the early Chinese and Japanese response to the Western

aggression of the Portuguese. Tibetans and Burmese have tried the same with much more persistence. Success in such pacific-isolationist resistance is rare, and even in these rare instances, rather pathetic in their very success.

(4) It is also fascinating to observe that sometimes the aggression may defeat itself by its own internecine conflicts. The Portuguese, the French, the Dutch and the British fought each other in their bid to dominate India, and each suffered from this conflict. Even today, there is not only the conflict between America and Western Europe on the one hand, but even more important, between Western Marxism and Western Liberalism on the other. The victims of aggression often seek to cash in on these internal squabbles of the aggressor.

With all these nuances, it is correct to say that the second (second only to a cultural-literary revival) most important requirement for a renaissance is a creative encounter with an alien culture, civilisation and values. The victim culture may reject many elements of the aggressor culture. Gandhi himself rejected the acquisitiveness, the aggressiveness, the love of affluence and comfort, and the gratificationist approach to life and life-fulfilment, which elements were central to Western culture. But neither were the Indian people willing to follow Gandhi, nor could Gandhi prevent the massive over-running of our culture by western culture. In fact, was not Gandhi himself a product more of the encounter of cultures than of the Indian culture by itself? What about Raja Ramohun Roy or Bankim Chandra Chatterjee?

We have had the stimulus of western liberal culture for at least four generations and of Marxist culture for two. We have fought little against these cultures; we have too readily absorbed many of their unexamined assumptions. Perhaps a new encounter at greater depth with these two cultures may spark off some creativity.

Great changes in society are seldom the consequence of exclusively political and economic factors, though these invariably play a major role. We need accept neither the monistically

Marxistic interpretations which try to attribute every-thing to the political-economic structure, nor need we, like some western thinkers (e.g., Christopher Dawson), assert the primacy of the spiritual over the political-economic.

Let us examine another point. Does a renaissance require a religious universalism, or can it spring also from narrower religious loyalties or even from a secular commitment? Our own 19th century Indian renaissance created various types of religious universalisms. The Arya Samaj, a product of the Indian renaissance advocated Upanishadic universalism.

For Toynbee, there are only four roads open to a civilisation which finds the main road of comfortable and easy progress blocked by social catastrophe on military defeat — archaism, futurism, detachment and transfiguration. Of these the first three he regards as *culs de sac*; only transfiguration through re-birth can lead 'right onwards'. The difference between detachment and transfiguration is that the former is a withdrawal without real return, whereas the latter implies withdrawal for return. Neither detachment nor transfiguration, however, lead immediately to the creation of a new civilisation, for it is civilisation as the City of Destruction from which one withdraws into the forest or desert.

Toynbee is convinced that '*nirvana*' is not the terminus of the soul's journey: it is merely a station on its route. The terminus is the kingdom of God and this omnipresent kingdom calls for service from its citizens on earth here and now.' Or to speak in Chinese philosophical language, a civilisation has to go through the *Yang* phase of destruction which then leads to the *Yin* phase of detachment. It then could lead again to a creative *Yang* phase of transfiguration and renewal. It is this creative *Yang* phase which Toynbee calls the true renaissance, in Greek, *palingenesia* or being born again. The spiritual element for a renaissance cannot then, according to Toynbee, be simply renunciation of the world or detachment from it.

The concept of *moksha* or *mukti* is

the 'primary concern of all the schools of Indian philosophy, orthodox and heterodox, theistic and non-theistic, with the exception of Carvaka materialism.'

Prof.T.M.P Mahadevan's arguments, including his reference to Sankara's concept of *loka-sangraha* (world maintenance) in the *Gita-bhashya* (III:20), defines *loka-sangraha* as remedying the deviations of the masses (*lokasya unma bargapravrttinivaranam*). For Buddhism too, the task of the Bodhisattva is to take the straying people back to the Way. But neither of these lines gives much of a basis or orientation for political — economic



Shankaracharya

structures and values. *Dharma* certainly is not the sphere of political ethics or social morality; it relates to *mukti* or *moksha*, and not to *artha* or *kama*. *Dharma* does relate to the duties of a monarch, but has to be seriously strained if it has to be applied to the political-economic structures of a democratic society. In the *Ramayana* one finds the values of husband-wife, paternal-filial and other personal relationships depicted and illustrated. In the *Gita* the ideal of action without attachment (*nishkamakarma*) is gloriously described and exemplified. *Samyama* and *satya* are also social values. But all these values, are they not personal values, *purusharthas* which cannot provide sufficient basis for a political economy?

I am not suggesting, as Toynbee does, that the Christian notion of the

kingdom of God provides a better basis for modern democratic societies than that provided by traditional Indian philosophies. I am simply raising a point about which Sri Aurobindo seems to have been somewhat conscious, when he says in his *Essays on the Gita*:

'Thus nirvana is clearly compatible with world-consciousness and with action in the world.... Action in the world is not inconsistent with living in Brahman; it is rather its inevitable condition and outward result....'

The key question today in India is — Is the Advaita-Vedantic view a sufficient framework to provide the impetus for a real renaissance in India today? My own conviction is that it is insufficient on the following grounds:

(a) The Advaita-Vedantic view, especially in its neo-Sankarite version, is today shared only by a small minority, mainly Brahmin, in India; it is an elitist philosophy

(b) this view, while it has something important to say to all humanity does not commend itself to non-Hindus (as well as to a large majority of Hindus), and cannot unite our nation for a creative effort

(c) this view does not inspire much basis for artistic creativity or provide new orientations for a political economy

(d) this view has not come to grips with the myriad questions that face our society today in the social, economic, political and cultural realms, as a result of the impact of western civilisation and the urban-technological culture.

I, at least would recognise the absolute necessity for a religious-spiritual element for a genuine renaissance in India or elsewhere. Sometimes the religious-spiritual element may take the form of an ideology — even a secular ideology which insists on calling itself materialist. Finding the right ideological-spiritual spur seems a *sine qua non* for a renaissance.

In our present cultural context appealing to one aspect of our religious heritage (Sankarite Vedanta from the 8th century A.D.) may not provide that

spur. It will have to be a more comprehensive spiritual element that comes out of our truly classical past - the time of the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*, the time of Buddha and Mahavira, the time of Ashoka and Kanishka. This rich heritage was never monolithic or uniform; it was a creative milieu where many ideas competed — where Greek, Persian and Central Asian ideas were impinging upon the Indian mind and stimulating it to fresh creativity. It was pluralistic, but not permissively pluralistic in the western liberal way. The pluralism involved furious but learned debate. It was not placid or unfeeling; on the contrary, the debate was impassioned and sprang out of life concerns, out of the concern to find meaning and significance for life.

In the case of the European renaissance, the spiritual ferment came from the questioning of the spiritual authority of the Church establishment, rejecting its values, its world-view and its dogmas. The spiritual spark came from a conflict of cultures — between the Church culture of medieval Christendom and the humanistic culture of a revived Graeco-Romanism. It had a spiritual energy in its very anti-religious fury, for it was fighting against the dark and dehumanising forces of religious fanaticism and superstition.

We in India have to ask the question — are we trying to harness our spiritual energies to the three ideas of western liberalism, belief in Man, Reason and Progress, in order to produce an Indian Renaissance? Our first modern Indian Renaissance in the 18th and 19th centuries did not put its faith in that creed; it was aborted because India was not free to pursue it. Our second modern renaissance, initiated by Gandhi and led by Nehru came to adopt this liberal creed, especially after the death of Gandhi. I myself am convinced that our second renaissance is already aborted, and does not have in it the energy to activate our flagging national spirit. We can talk about a scientific temper or a humanistic temper, but both remain equally alien to the deepest levels of our Indian consciousness.

We have not yet found our way to that deepest level, in order to stir up our national creativity. Several conditions are necessary for triggering an Indian Renaissance that could be sustained for a few generations. The most difficult of all, it seems to me, is to touch the source-springs of the spiritual creativity of our people.

It is time for us to look for a team which can accept each other's leadership and in which no one attempts to attain personal prominence. But such a team would have to be different from the brainwashed intellectual elite of our time — pale and inauthentic shadows of the western elite of bygone days. We will need people who know the people of India, are close to them in thought and attitudes, and yet can rise

We in India have to ask the question — are we trying to harness our spiritual energies to the three ideas of western liberalism, belief in Man, Reason and Progress, in order to produce an Indian Renaissance?

above mass frenzies and passions to guide the people along the path of sanity and service to others. Such a team must at the same time be at home in the ancient cultures of India and energetic in the effort to create a new future for India. They should react passionately against the intellectual and spiritual castration undergone by the Indian intelligentsia in the past 150 years. They should have the literary resources to get back to our rich heritage and present it to the people in terms which make sense to them in their struggle for justice and dignity. They should also be open to all the cultures of the world and to all of human history. They should have special sensitivity for the suppressed and marginalised aspects of our heritage — especially Adivasi, Harijan and Buddhist cultures, as also the Muslim, Christian, Sikh and Parsi and even Jewish elements in our culture. The team should have competence in science

and technology, but also an awareness of the philosophical and social problems connected with modern science/technology. They should be in touch with the leading economic, social and political forces in India without being their prisoner or tool. They should also have the spiritual power, drawn from religious or secular sources, to pursue the vision without fear and when needed to lay down their lives for the people. ❧

Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios hails from Kerala, in South India. He pursued a brilliant academic career from American Ivy League colleges, Oxford and Germany. He has received numerous prizes and awards in theology and for service to humanity from several countries. Honours have been heaped on him. Some of them are The Order of St. Vladimir, USSR, Soviet Land Nehru Award, India and the Oskar Pfister Award (American Psychiatric Association). His many publications include, *The Joy of Freedom, Science for Sane Societies, Cosmic Man, A Light too Bright, Enlightenment - East and West and a Human God*. He is currently director of Niti Santi Kendra, a Centre for Justice and Peace Initiatives, New Delhi. Father Gregorios, though a man of the cloth, is a vigorous intellectual and his contributions to world philosophy is stupendous.

MYTH MAGIC

Is there a corner of this ancient country that does not have its own little bit of folklore, its unique little myth? If you know of one, come share it with our readers. Just remember that the myth should have a local flavour and if it has some connection to something identifiable in the contemporary world, so much the better.

Type out your piece and rush it in to us at

THE EYE

Towards a Renaissance - Some Historical Perspectives Drawing on early times

ROMILA THAPAR

Historical perspectives are inevitably perceived from the perspective of the present. A society has many pasts from which it chooses and out of this it creates its history. The choice is frequently determined by those who are dominant although occasionally the voices of others may also be heard. Perspectives on the Indian past have tended to be monolithic: an unchanging caste society; an economy totally conditioned by whether or not the State was owner of the land; a religion, Hinduism, the understanding of which has been constantly paralleled with that of the Semitic religions. Some of these perceptions have to be seriously reconsidered.

The concept of a nation and the coming into being of the Nation State is a development of modern times. The concept of 'Nation' had its roots in medieval European communities and grew to importance only from the late 18th century, accompanied as it was by an expansion of economic opportunities, the notion of liberal institutions, an emphasis on legal forms and the growth of a culture of rationalism. The idea of the nation-state was itself a product of a particular historical moment. There is therefore a historical lag between the condition prior to the nation-state and its emergence. In part our present problems arise from our inability to comprehend the nature of this lag.

If we are to use the analogy of the European renaissance then it is questionable whether in fact there was a renaissance in India in the nineteenth century. Quite apart from the fact that the catalyst came from outside and not from within the society in India, the major ideological contribution of the renaissance, the notion of humanism which pervaded the approach to every aspect of life, was based primarily on a rejection of the dominance of the Church even though this rejection sought legitimacy by going back to what were interpreted as the institutions of the Greco-Roman civilisation, prior to and antithetical to, the Christian Church. In India we are now seeking legitimacy from the past in attempts to build institutions which would be conducive to the powers of a Church should there have been a Church in



Raja Ramohun Roy, 19th century founder of Brahmo Samaj which modelled its ritual on Protestant services. The 19th century Indian renaissance broadly accepted the European Orientalists' view of the early Indian past.

India. For instance, by insisting on the historical existence of a Hindu community, or other communities defined solely by an overarching religious identity, we endorse the idea of an ecclesiastical infrastructure even where it did not exist before. The idea that the religious community was a basic identity of Indian society was fostered in the nineteenth century. By accepting it we have moved a long distance away from the presuppositions of a renaissance.

There is a historical lag between the condition prior to the nation-state and its emergence. In part our present problems arise from our inability to comprehend the nature of this lag.

The nineteenth century Indian 'renaissance' broadly accepted the European orientalist's view of the early Indian past which was derived largely from brahmanical textual sources and which conceded the correctness of the colonial comprehension of our past. Even nationalist historians made little attempt to change the basic paradigm put forward by European orientalist scholarship, a paradigm conditioned certainly by paucity of evidence but equally by European intellectual preconceptions within a colonial framework. A radical change in the understanding of our past, demands not only the questioning of these preconceptions and this framework but also the need to consider the perspectives of Indian sources other than only the brahmanical. This process will also enable us to place the totality of sources in a more realistic historical context.

Such changes are evident at the level of scholarship but have not percolated to the level of the general intelligentsia, because of our rather closed attitude to learning. The European renaissance was also a rebirth of learning, where the established modes, methodologies and content of learning were scrutinised and reconsidered and many were discarded. Our educational forms continue to be essentially in the colonial mode. In addition, Indian society is becoming more suspicious of intellectual analysis, for it is dismissed by the conservative establishment which seeks to cover up its ignorance by



MAN, MYTH AND MAGIC VOL. I

There has been too great a weightage on emphasising the process of civilisation in Indian society as a one way process of aspiring towards brahmnical culture.

and of ideologies which legitimise the present. There has been for example, too great a weightage on emphasising the process of civilisation in Indian society as a one-way process of aspiring towards brahmanical culture. That brahmanism itself has more often than not had to accommodate itself to non-brahmanical culture, and that even the constituents of what we know of Hindu practice and ritual today are compounded of the ideologies of non-caste groups, as is evident in various religious sects; and that the internalisation of influences from other religions such as Islam, are all factors which are sought to be ignored. Yet the very label 'Hindu' for the religion is of Islamic origin and Christian usage. Similarly those who seek to define Islamic culture see it only in terms of

Arab and Persian roots and fail to incorporate the reality of the Indianness of Islam in India, where for example in the folk literature of many areas, Semitic prophets have intermingled with *puranic* deities. The history of religion in India requires a major change of paradigm if its origins and evolution are to be understood with accuracy and sensitivity.

Given the acceptance in recent times of religious identities being central to social and political action, there is now a greater turning to religion and ritual. Rituals are resurrected or invented which, it is insisted, go back to the past. Such resurrections are seldom motivated by reasons of religious sensibility and where rituals are concerned they can be equally a demonstration of affluence as they have frequently been in the past. Public demonstrations of ritual convey many messages: they lay claim to tradition and therefore to culture, their performers claim piety, and the wealth implicit in the more dramatic among the rituals underlines status.

All societies in the course of their history are constantly negotiating relations with deities and religious beliefs and the religions of Indian civilisation are no exception. Alienation at various points of historical change leads to the invention of new rituals which are said to be traditional. The over-emphasis on ritual is also an attempt to compensate for the social change which often creates a distance from earlier rituals regarded as traditional. But the situation in India is

The renaissance was also associated with a social crisis involving the identity of new social groups arriving at a dominant position. In Europe it was the centrality of an urban society. In nineteenth century India it was the emergence of the middle class which required new forms of expression. This middle class is drawn from a wider spectrum, consequently the effects of a social change are greater. The alienation implicit in modernisation is sought to be assuaged by the creation of a past



THE SPEAKING TREE

Those who seek to define Islamic culture see it only in terms of Arab and Persian roots and fail to incorporate the reality of the Indianness of Islam in India.

JANAM BHUMI ? IBADAT GAH ? OR RANA BHUMI ?



Religion as an ideology needs to be analysed, for until the political and economic dimensions of religious ideology are not discussed, even at the expense of hurting sensibilities, there can be no real move away from dogma to humanism.

further compounded by the overwhelming pressure of political negotiation which is conducted in tandem with religious identities as is the case in the argument supporting the existence of majority and minority communities in India. To then maintain that every aspect of religion is sacrosanct and that nothing can be said or written about it, is to indulge in political blackmail. If religion is to play a political role as it does in the concept of majority and minority communities, then it must be subjected to the same analyses as all political ideologies.

Religion as an ideology needs to be analysed in all its dimensions, for, until the political and economic dimensions of religious ideology are not openly discussed, even at the expense of hurting sensibilities, there can be no real move away from dogma to humanism. Any renaissance or rebirth assumes a critical assessment of the past and such an assessment is still small and of a recent vintage in

our society. In this connection it could well be asked whether there is really a tyranny of a bygone age or are we deliberately cultivating this idea as an excuse which allows us not to think through to its logical conclusion, the implications of the kinds of change envisaged in what we regard today as our ideals, such as secularism and democracy.

If the roots of a nation lie in its earlier communities then the nature of these communities has to be examined. A continuous historical process in India tied to that of social function was the creation of castes. Caste as the dominant organisational structure of Indian society was not the rigid, frozen system that we have been made to believe. It evolved over time, changed with reference to historical changes and adjusted to these. What was constant was the ideological framework which it carried and which enabled the upper levels to control the rest. The structure of this social organisation was closely related to a variety of

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factors: adaptation to environment, control over technology, access to economic resources, patterns of kinship and marriage and validation through ideology. The primacy of each of these could vary in specific situations. Moral judgements on whether caste was good or evil seem pointless. All early societies believed in human inequality. Our problem is that we coupled social and economic inequality with birth and the notion of untouchability and thus marginalised a large part of our society into being treated as virtually non-human. The problem then is one of integrating groups which have been excluded in history and from history. The enormous ideological emphasis on hierarchy presupposes a tension with those further down the scale, probably because there had to be a constant vigilance over who was recruited to higher levels. There was also tension with those outside caste organisation some of whom constituted what we today call 'the tribal peoples'. These were non-caste clans who, through being conquered or through induction, were either excluded as untouchables or else were slotted into caste hierarchy on the basis of their earlier stratification. Those reduced to untouchability joined a large number of others so designated for reasons of occupational practice.

The taking on of a caste identity by a non-caste group was a way of denying their own past and their own identity. Today the insistence is not on a caste identity but on the acceptance of mainstream Hinduism as defined by various Hindu organisations of recent

times. The introduction of missionaries and the ritual of conversion, invented for Hinduism in the nineteenth century, is aimed at untouchables and 'tribals' in order to swell the numbers of those who can be counted as 'Hindus'. The conversion to Buddhism as an alternative strategy has not been of much help, for neo-Buddhists like neo-Hindus, lose out on the swings what they gain on the roundabouts, and consequently many prefer to call themselves Schedule Caste Buddhists. A policy of reservation although it may seem to suggest a temporary solution, in fact, reinforces distinctions and will eventually have to be discarded for more effective solutions. Such solutions do not lie in the easy way out, namely, lowering standards to accommodate those who have not had opportunities in the past. This is a self-defeating process. It would be more useful in the long run to introduce opportunities for those previously excluded even if it means curtailing some at the upper levels.

To replace caste by religion does not help the process of nation-building. But since we have entered this latter condition, possibly an opposition to it might result in an attempt at a new system of social organisation where the existing association of rights (or an absence of rights) relating either to caste or to religious community will have to be addressed. The reality of caste therefore has to be seen in terms of the factors responsible for its continuance in a specific area. Why should it still be necessary that the bulk of the labour be provided by untouchables, low castes and tribals? The measure of change in a caste-based society should be gauged by these realities and not by the occasional Harijan minister. In the case of what have been called Scheduled Tribes, such a change could be introduced with greater facility if there is a will to do so.

The social hierarchy was not divorced from economic stratification and changing economic patterns were tied into the degree to which economic resources were exploited. Land has always been taken as a measure of the



Hindu and Sufi mystics were drawn from a much larger and more amorphous group with different ideologies and belief-systems, the renouncers.

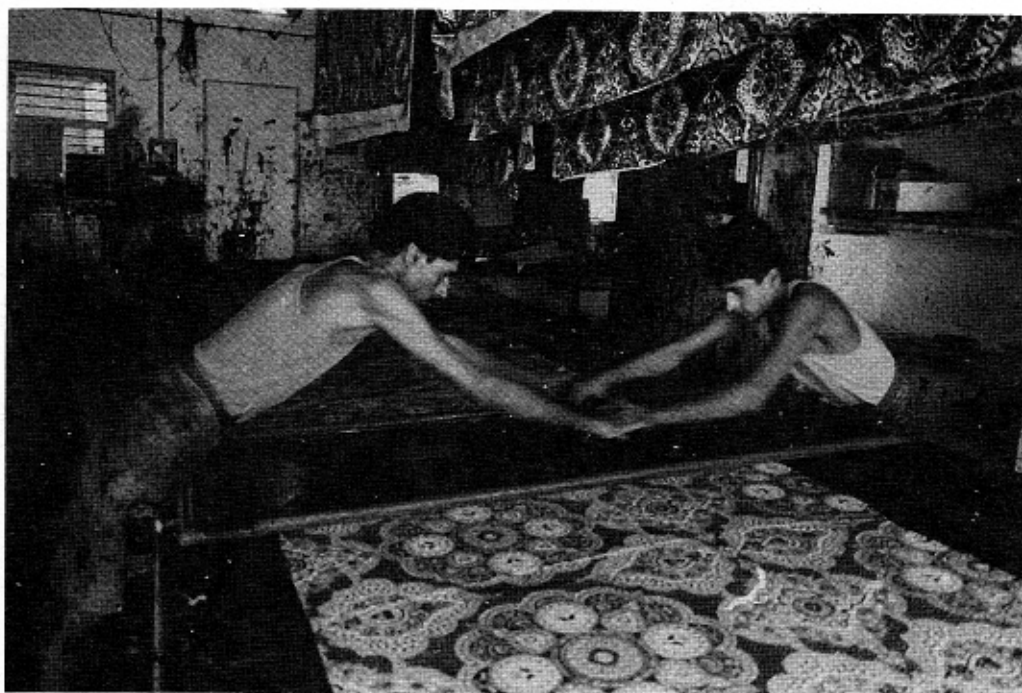
major source of income. But there were some periods of more intense utilisation, and others less so. This can be judged in part by the change in policy where earlier governments skimmed off the revenue in many areas, to later administrations which intensified the source of revenue from land to support a larger number of kingdoms with an increasing pressure on those who were the producers of revenue. Interestingly the forms of peasant protest also change from references to peasant migrations being the main form in earlier times, to peasant revolts being recorded from the early second millennium A.D. An increase in revenue also came from the conversion of waste land to cultivation, often encroaching on the territories of 'tribal groups'. The nexus of revenue

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collection involved not only the State and the cultivator but a range of intermediaries as well. The politics of the latter was often the immediate reason for the need to increase revenue. The control over land exercised by the intermediaries, some of whom could be seen as unproductive, became the crux of the agrarian economy and the dominant factor of caste in the rural areas, a situation which has not altogether changed.

Agriculture was not the sole resource nor in some areas the major one. Networks of exchange became more permanent in settled areas and in many regions trade was a major resource. Periods of intensive urbanisation accompanied the wider networks of trade and in some areas the urban economy was a constant feature. Historically the Indian trader has played the role of middle-man par excellence in various channels of Asian trade. It would seem that Indian traders were not necessarily the initiators of major trade, but having entered, soon began to play a controlling role. The aggressive thrust of the Indian entrepreneur has been a part of Indian history and is not a new feature. This was also one area in which the theoretical hierarchies of caste as envisaged in brahmanical ideology were often upset, for trade was regarded as low in brahmanical reckoning, whereas traders were frequently wealthy. They tended in early times to support non-brahmanical religions which accorded them a high status, irrespective of brahmanical hierarchies.

Politics has always been an open field in early India. In spite of the injunctions of the *shastras* that kingship should belong to the *Kshatriya* caste, some of the major dynasties have been of non-*Kshatriya* origin, such as the Mauryas, ambiguously referred to as *sudras* and heretics. Others in later times were of obscure origin and went to suspiciously elaborate and obvious lengths to have themselves proclaimed *Kshatriyas*. The fact that politics was open, loosened the hierarchy of caste and opened up the possibilities of participation in power to larger numbers than is generally assumed. Latching on



Why should it still be necessary that the bulk of the labour be provided by untouchables, low castes and tribals?

to power therefore is not a new phenomenon. Nevertheless politics did not have absolute primacy. What is new now is the primacy given to politicians and to political activities and the latitude to abuse power. The abuse of power was cautioned against and there were methods to contain it.

Traditionally there were at least two groups that could freely comment on the abuse of power. These were groups other than factions among the elite and the usual contenders for power. These were not participants in power. One group was that of the bards, the caste which legitimised the authority of the king by maintaining his genealogy. They had the right to accuse the king of having misused his power and could either do a *dharna* or commit ritual suicide to force the point home. The emphasis here is that the right of opposition is given to those who are the legitimisers of power. Who are the legitimisers of power today and do they also exercise their function as critics of the abuse of power?

The other group was the much larger and more amorphous one drawn from many castes and following any among a range of ideologies and belief-systems—the renouncers. These were the mendicants, monks, *sadhus*,

faqirs, *sufis* and such like. Some were pillars of the establishment and their centres were foci of loyalty to political power and social authority. Others having opted out of social obligations, and opposed to religious orthodoxy, were the quintessential dissenters. These were generally feared by those in political authority for they commanded immense respect and their criticism was heard and was believed to be impartial. They were respected by society because they had renounced power (although there probably were, as there are today, some who used this as a front to be close to those in power and thereby wield it), and this enabled them to activate opposition where they thought it necessary. Such opposition was not revolutionary in context and was frequently not even confrontational. Sometimes it was neutralised by being appropriated by those against whom it was directed. Nevertheless it nurtured the yeast of dissent. The existence of autonomous individuals free to criticise was once a landmark of our civilisation. Today they are becoming an endangered species. And autonomous individuals are crucial to the process of building a society.

Communication in pre-modern India has been viewed as the history of texts. But communication was both

oral and literate and within these there were a variety of sub-categories. There was the closed oral tradition, such as the memorising of Vedic texts, which was kept strictly within the confines of certain groups of brahmans. In contrast was the open oral tradition, the *kathas* and the *kavyas*, which constantly were added to and subtracted from. This was the socially more vibrant tradition, since the oral editing of compositions and the creating of new ones was intertwined with historical change. The oral tradition as an agency of knowledge was also predominant in professional training;

where vocational training with a master was more important than literacy. In this context literacy sometimes played a stultifying role. Many of the *shastras*, composed to encapsulate professional knowledge, tended to foreclose such knowledge. It required literacy in Sanskrit, a requirement which made knowledge a preserve of a particular caste and an avenue to power in the earlier period. Later, with the development of regional languages, it bifurcated the practitioner from the theoretician. Whereas literacy made techniques more widely available to those who were literate, as for example in the building of temples in various parts of India, it also tended to freeze the canon and innovation became more difficult. It would be interesting to speculate on what the Hindu temple might have looked like, had there been no instructions from the *Shilpa-shastras* and the true arch and dome as innovations had been allowed a free play.

If literacy was a quantum leap in communication, the same is true for the change from manuscript to printing and more recently from this to the audiovisual media. The media in a sense draws upon the oral tradition and if used creatively could be most effective in a society where the oral

tradition is still predominant. In societies such as ours in which the oral is still the more viable means of communication, it should not be dismissed as the more primitive with a premium on literacy to the point where little or nothing is imparted through the oral tradition. The combination of the two and their complementarity needs to be utilised. This is not to suggest that literacy should be neglected but that the use of both can make communication more effective. The potential for this has not even begun to be tapped. Educational programmes are generally sub-standard and largely devoid of attempts at encouraging people to think. Learning is not merely the passing on of a body of information. It is equally a method of teaching people how to be innovative in their professions.

The textual tradition being dominant in our conceptions of culture there is a tendency to try and homogenise culture, overlooking the divergences in texts and treatment of subjects. That the same theme was often picked up by diverse authors does not mean that each conveys the same message. A careful reading often reflects a divergence of treatment. The theme then becomes merely the example being quoted and the debate is conducted through treating the theme in diverse ways from different ideological perspectives. A clear case of this is the varied renderings over time of the story of the Ramayana — the Bhrgu transformation, the Buddhist, the Jaina, the Ramanandin, the various 'tribal' versions - to name just a few, which incorporate very substantial differences of meaning and ideological stance. The poverty of cultural sensitivity is now so immense that we can only relate ourselves to the version of Ramanand Sagar. This ironing out of culture deprives it of the many



An endangered species — The Bauls of Bengal were out of the social system and could freely comment on the abuse of power.

resonances which are essential to the identities of those who constitute Indian society. The interaction of cultural systems is possibly a healthier way of projecting culture in a nation-state than the aim of conforming to a single pattern. What binds the systems together is the comprehension which each has of the other.

Attitudes to oral and literate knowledge have a bearing also on what constitutes knowledge and the mechanism of its transmission. Given the use of the audio-visual media traditional forms where appropriate, can be used to introduce new ideas, as they were used in the past. This has a very direct bearing on the propagation of what has been called the development of a rational culture in the process of nation-building. It is particularly pertinent to at least the primary level of the diffusion of new knowledge and is even more pertinent to the ongoing debate on the impact of new technologies on the environment, on the economy and on social values. It might also assist in providing a self-respect to professional activity which tends today to be overshadowed in

India by subservience to politicians in every field. The overwhelming expectations of patronage from the State at all levels, channelled through a bureaucratic structure of controls, is enough to effectively weaken both initiative and creativity. ❧

Romila Thapar is a historian of great repute. Having attained her first degree from Punjab University, she went on to do her Ph.D in 1958. She was Professor of Ancient Indian History at the Centre for Historical Studies, JNU. She was Honourary Fellow at the Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford and also a Visiting Professor at Cornell University. In 1957 she undertook a study tour of Buddhist cave sites in China. She broadcasts frequently for the BBC and is remembered for her programme Talks for Asia. Her publications include, Ashoka and the Decline of the Mauryas, Ancient Indian Social History - Some Interpretations and a children's book called Indian Tales.

MRINAL PANDE



unnecessary imitateness and or approval-seeking from its western counterparts, with rather comic and adverse emotional, and professional consequences. Early in 1984, a young Hindi freelance journalist from Indore tried to sell a well-researched report on the possible dangers of the ill-maintained Union Carbide factory in Bhopal, much before disaster actually struck. His report was turned down by every major English daily in New Delhi. Finally a Hindi daily bought and published it. But since people who matter in Delhi or Bhopal seldom read Hindi dailies, the report was not taken note of. It was only after the Bhopal disaster, when the *Time* magazine quoted it, that everyone rushed to re-quote it, and interview and eulogise the now certifiably brilliant young journalist who needless to say, turned into a media celebrity overnight.

It is thus of little import that the largest number of newspapers and periodicals in the country are published in Hindi and that these along with Malayalam, Bengali and Tamil periodicals command the largest circulation. The Anglo-centric focus is strong in every sector in India's fiscal and agricultural policy making, its corporate world and its multinational-controlled ad agencies. Today the market share of the total advertising revenue of the English language print media (read and understood by 1.7 per cent of our people) is five times that of the Hindi, and many more times that of the other Indian languages. This disproportionate flow of monetary resources has a lethal effect on the quality, both in content and production, and on the status of the language journals and dailies even within a publishing house. Nine bundles of grass for the milch cow and a kick in the udders for the dry one, as they say.

Inadequate funding is the first signal to the language press, of its inferiority. It tells them that most owners, as also most intellectuals and politicians, consider them to be less deserving, less valuable. Such insufficient

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attention and lack of close monitoring have two major ill effects: one, it discourages and disheartens the young and talented within the language press, and two, it also lets pass unnoticed, appallingly retrograde, communal and revisionist stances taken by major sections of the language print media. For example, while most major English dailies condemned the Roop Kanwar *Sati* incident in no uncertain terms, some of their Marwari and Hindi sister dailies have come out with reports and editorials which in effect condoned or sensationalised the act. Had it not been for the vociferous protests from militant womens' groups against one such

editorial, these would probably have gone entirely unnoticed by the Indian intelligentsia, who seem to overlook the fact that ninety per cent of rural readers read no English. Similar reactionary trends have marked the coverage of riots in Bhiwandi, Meerut, and in Ahmedabad, with the law enforcers combing only the English language media and pronouncing that all was more or less well there.

Such power imbalances in the structure and performance of the Indian media, are not peculiar to the media scene. They are historical in nature, and manifest themselves in various forms in many other socio-economic power structures within our country. Take women and other outgroups for example. Today, they may well ask in the words of the Kumaoni proverb — so what if there is gold in Ravana's Lanka, what does my father get? For both as participants and targets, these groups largely experience the language media as a major vehicle through which the language and practice of segregationist ideas are increasingly being communicated and learnt. Yes, of late rather a large number of news stories and columns, have been appearing about the 'womens' question' and the 'minority question', but to describe stray instances of the oppression of women or the minorities in isolation, as most of them do, is to ignore the cumulative forces (such as sexism and religion, caste and class-based discrimination), and also to under-estimate the nature and intensity of their revolt when it arises, and the socio-political backlash that, they, in turn, would generate.

Our political reporting has certainly become more readable and investigative in recent years, but of late, with several newspaper barons becoming referees and ring-masters for rival political groups, a certain prize-fight school of journalism is the order of the day — all punches and footwork and bleeding noses. The Bofors, Fairfax and allied topics began their long innings in our media early in 1988. Much of the media portrayal of



both could be read as high comedy, if it weren't so tragic. Part of this tragicomic effect derives from the media's dazzlingly contortionist attempts to come to terms with the question — who knew, and how much? As if the answer would somehow provide the key in assessing the debacle in the political situation! One finds veteran columnists grappling with the question in a manner almost Talmudic in subtlety and layered density!

The deeper truth remains that traditionally after the General Elections, for about the first two years of any chosen party's term, the Indian electorate and the Press (with a sort of a sigh and a nod) have always endeavoured to shield themselves from the day-to-day recognition of what parliamentarians and ministers are upto, and what the consequences of their activities might be. They seem to prefer to rouse themselves suddenly, almost routinely, at mid-term to whatever misdeeds they feel are going on, demand appointment of national probe committees, lay investigative siege of the South Block, and then sit back and watch its own electoral mandate come crumbling down. In Indian politics in recent years a landslide election victory has become an ill omen for whichever party wins it.

Such routine discrediting in one way or another, of those whom we ourselves have elected to manage the country, followed by open, public avowal by the editors and owners of dailies as to how such dramatic disclosures and investigative muck-raking have sent the circulation figures of their periodicals soaring, suggests

the presence of a profound disorder in the media.

Granted that such reporting wins friends and influences people, but what, one wonders, do the powerful media barons assume of the ordinary



reader's understanding of the way the country is functioning? In news analysis and cartoons today, the world and national leaders on the pages of our dailies and periodicals seem adrift in a world of happenstance, and the messages warn that no action will do any good. No one seems talented at solving the riddle that is the Indian democracy.

Since politics sells, politicisation of social issues seems to have become popular too. The move towards the abolition of the Personal Laws and their replacement with a Common Civil Code, began its long ratification process with the landmark Shah Bano case. The women in the media played a major role here in informing, analysing and legally challenging the anti-woman stances. But by and large, the major part of the media began to drag its feet when the issue inevitably got deflected

into the communal arena. Even some ardent female supporters of the Civil Code were heard saying that no legal reform was worth it, if it hurt and alienated a community.

Understandably the readers are confused. We thought that the grass was green to begin with, but if equal time and insistence is spent on saying it is purple, the simple, home bound, god-fearing majority may soon come to doubt their perceptions.

A randomness that confuses, (like guilt) is a powerful tool for social control. If the powerful can divide the already divided and shaky majority of ordinary journalists and citizens into disconnected, self-protecting individuals, perhaps they need never fear organised resistance from them. One is not suggesting that there is a conscious collaboration between the political and the media establishments, a conspiracy intended to keep the small-town language journalists and the common folk in their subordinate places. It doesn't need to be. Within the media and in print, within the offices and out in the streets, the message is loud and clear, success lies in learning the rules and following them. Don't trust your colleagues. The big world of action is dangerous and chancy. If you are not with us all the way, you'll do well to stay out of it. Sit still, or write if you must, on films, fast food, and fancy-dress balls.

Will we follow that message almost two generations after we won the ballot, and four generations after the Sati was outlawed? ❧

Illustrations : Ripin Kalra

'Newspapers, need to free themselves from the dominance of recency as the determinant of news value. Processes, social and economic, are at least as important as events. We will serve society better if we look for and report information that is socially significant. This will entail a shift of the focus of attention from VIPs to Very Ordinary Persons, the common men and women whom all ministers and politicians claim to serve.'

(Late) P. Unnikrishnan, General Manager Press Trust of India

'Comment is free but facts are sacred.' Charles Prestwich Scott.

'Some of us in the area of communication have presented a rather simple solution. Why not inter-marry the two, the modern media and the traditional forms to carry the message? The reach and potential of the audio-visual media alone do not ensure peoples' participation and media identification.'

(Late) N.L. Chowla Director General, NAMEDIA, New Delhi

Mrinal Pande is a journalist, author, activist, teacher. Educated in English Literature, Indian classical music and art, Mrinal has published short story collections, novels and plays in Hindi and English. Many of her publications focus on the status of Indian women. She serves on several committees appointed for women's issues, art, culture and Indian Literature. She is Secretary General, Editors' Guild of India and President, Indian Women's Press Corps. Mrinal has received several awards for Hindi journalism.

TWO INDIAS

And the Great English Divide

SURESH CHANDRA SHUKLA

The irony if not the tragedy, of India is that the language in which its elite and its intelligentsia for the most part thinks and communicates is not the language in which the overwhelming masses of its people, over ninety five per cent think and communicate. And this is not mere linguistic matter.

Even if one did not go all the way with Ram Manohar Lohia in speaking of an English speaking caste — and one wonders why one may not — all the contradictions and cleavages of India's society and culture are sharply brought into relief. The role of India's own languages, the resources of its fabric of culture and social organisation, the unifying and invigorating influences of modern technology and economy acquire all the greater importance in the fresh flowering of India even as they contend against the great divide (English versus non-English) in our society. It accentuates the thrust in the direction of the two Indias, that of those above and those below the hunger (or poverty) line, those within or outside the web of literacy, communication or market transactions etc. It also accelerates the drive of the English using intelligentsia in the direction of a variety of subordinate links with the developed world. That this divide within and subordination without is not a mere product of the multiplicity of languages (or language-based nationality/regionalism) is illustrated by the case of unilingual Bangladesh which, for similar but even more acute reasons of history and political economy, is no less afflicted by the same maladies — they are worse there, if anything.

The history of the last two hundred years (and, of course, also the preceding millenia) offers much basis for an Indian nation of close on a billion humans but even more particularly, the last forty years of existence as a nation-state is an abiding fact. The development of one-sixth of the human

race as, potentially, one of the major centres of power and culture on the globe appears by now irreversible. Neither the break-up into many nation-states nor the undoing of a unified English-using elite dominating culture, technology and power appear to be on the agenda, much as the latter outcome is to be wished for.

Those disenfranchised from knowledge, power and culture by the English language are many more than the thirty to fifty per cent who live

below the poverty line. Thus we have three Indias (a) the English-using power elite, (b) the Indian language intelligentsia and c) finally the absolutely illiterate poor. Education works in this context to promote mobility from the second to the first India. It also orients it all in the direction of subservience to (or acquisition of technology and culture from) the 'developed' West. But the hard core, the bottom third, of the population does not seem to have the



In the upper third of India's population, science, technology, Jazz, Beethoven, Bharatnatyam and Bankura toys all flourish. The problem is, how does India do better than that?

prospect of graduating into literacy, mobility or education, unless major social and political struggles change the balance of political and economic power.

The renaissance of India in its current phase is thus fundamentally dependent on basic political restructuring, on a socio-economic revolution and much real education for change must come about through social and political struggles. Officially organised education in this context appears to have a highly limited role to play, if any. The advance of new educational technology, the centralisation of the curriculum in the name of a national system of education, or even the Navodaya Vidyalayas or national-merit-for-talent-scholarship type-schemes of social mobility or apparent equalisation or social justice can in the current context of socio-

economic power only lead to (a) co-option of ability from the middle and lower strata and (b) socialisation for subordination. This has been historically a function of educational systems in most societies. Only, our two distinguishing unfavourable characteristics are (a) the subordinate status of the whole system on the educational plane through the English language and on other planes through links of the political and economic kind to the developed world and (b) the inability, inherent in the very nature of the situation to involve the lower half to one-third of the population. If anything, educational action will reinforce the tendency of political and economic forces otherwise to divide society into two halves permanently. The hope or prospect of the middle strata to bring about a flowering of the Indian language intelligentsia and

culture is doomed by the prospect of upward mobility into the top layer i.e. the English intelligentsia.

Culturally, Philippines (with its Taglish linguistic-cultural situation) or Trinidad represent a miniature of the India that would result from such a present. We could produce a Naipaul or two but no large scale resurgence. At our level of poverty and social division even that could be problematic. In the upper third of India's population science, technology, Jazz, Beethoven, Bharatanatyam, and Bankura toys could all flourish and it could well function as a hinterland of Silicon Valley or even Novosibirsk. The problem is: how does India do better than that? ❧

Suresh Chandra Shukla is a scholar of repute. He has worked extensively on sociological and linguistic issues.

'In contemporary societies, many modernisation processes have been undermining the multi-directional, interactive, participatory processes in human communications, as is revealed from the present day targets of language standardisation and language teaching. Today language identity is characterised by the demands of language privileges in different spheres of life, and consequently the highbrow content of privileged language is cherished for its 'ornate' functions, particularly in the school system and in administration. Language as a means of communication and social mobility in a plural society acquires significantly different characteristics under the pressures of modernisation. It is the rural and working class learners who bear most of the brunt on language privileges and language elegance at the cost of effective communication.'

Prof. Lachman M. Khubchandani, Pune

'As folklore dies folklore institutes multiply.'

'In plural societies where majorities plan for minority education, they also decide what is good for minorities. Invariably, in the name of integration, nationhood, economic benefits, political compulsions and economy of management, the minorities are called upon to 'join the mainstream' by giving up their language and culture. The minority children begin with a triple handicap, one being a gap between their home language and the school language, the gap between the spoken language and the written language and the gap between their variety of the spoken regional language and the standard language. If they are called upon to study through English or Hindi medium, then it is foreign language learning for them.'

D.P. Pattanayak.

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Women

BUILDING NATIONS ?

K. SARADAMONI

The twentieth century feminist debate makes it politically correct to assume that women have an equally important role to play in the organic evolution of the renaissance of India. But when we discuss issues of nation building and the participation of women in it after fifty years of freedom, the schism between promises and performances is abysmally wide. What has independent India offered to women ? What is their present status ? The author takes a hard look that penetrates deeper than issues of politics, development, law and economics and pleads for an honest appraisal of the psychology of women kind.

Today when we discuss questions of nation building and the Indian renaissance after fifty years of freedom, the gap between promises and performance appears in big, bold letters. To the Indian middle class, however, the post-independence experience is a veritable success story. They could perform creditably in many areas, make spectacular gains and establish their hold more firmly. But this does not make up the Indian reality. Millions of women and men in this country with no access to education, health, housing or anything that is necessary for decent human living are struggling for their day-to-day existence with the irregular earnings they get out of their underpaid, unsteady work. Recipients or beneficiaries of 'target' oriented programmes, they have been reduced to mere numbers without receiving any cognizance of their struggles, hopes and hopelessness, desires and frustrations. The fact that even in their dire state they contribute substantially to keep society on its wheels remains ignored. The two are not unrelated or accidental. Understanding of this reality and the inter-relationship between the two is crucial to any realistic evaluation of the last fifty years, and to ask 'what to do from now on ?' But understanding

this demands a genuine search, an openness to ask new questions, and a willingness to see things afresh. Our search should not be restricted merely to matters concerning resources, priorities, production patterns, power structure, employment generation or schemes for the 'upliftment' of the poor and the identification of the needy. Equal importance should be given to ideology, changes in the value system, generation and spread of ideas and their influence on the thought process and behaviour of individuals and groups.

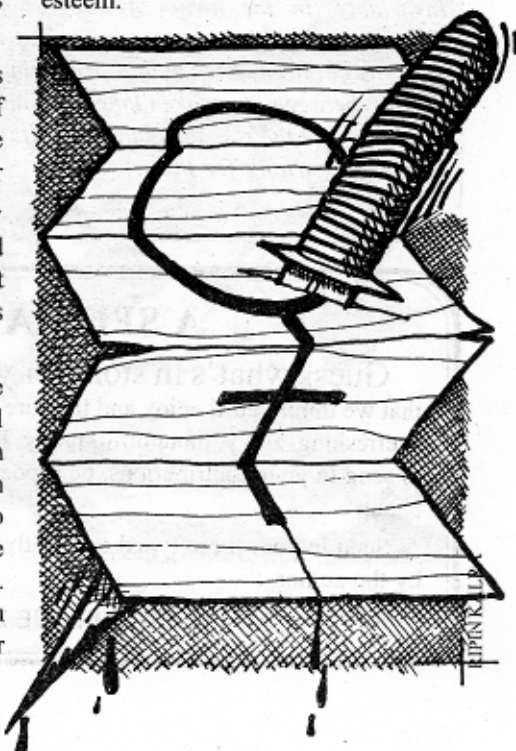
Though society's attitude towards the subordination and oppression of women in general is common, we have to examine women placed in their respective classes to capture the reality.

What has independent India offered to women ? What is their present status ? Let us see what various documents reveal:

1. Though the constitution of the country guarantees equality to all irrespective of gender, women experience nothing but inequality from birth. The opportunities opened to women and men are certainly more and varied when compared to 1947. But they are very limited when compared to the population looking for

opportunities. This is true for women and men; but for the majority of women, life is nothing but unsatisfied or crippled desires, experiencing only discrimination and neglect in matters of food, education, employment and health.

2. Qualities like patience, tolerance, submissiveness, self-effacement and suffering in silence which women have internalised for ages are 'glorified' as 'feminine' virtues. This continues to trap all women and lowers their self-esteem.



3. The media coverage of atrocities on women, women's struggles and 'protests' has increased. But in general, media portrayal is not that of positive womanhood. A self-confident, dignified and forward-looking woman is yet to emerge.

4. Women in general contribute substantially to the upkeep of the family and society, but their 'work' and contribution remain invisible,

8. The wider system of which the family is an essential unit is male dominated and upholds and unleashes patriarchal values, which are essentially hierarchical in nature. In our country where the caste hierarchy and its hold on the social and economic life of the people went unchallenged for thousands of years, it is easier to keep the gender hierarchy dim and confused, if not suppressed.

10. While great emphasis is laid on employment and income generating schemes for poorer women, no attempt is made to liberate women of the middle or upper strata from the clutches of a consumer society and the ideological base that sustains it. This has a long term dangerous influence on women and the family she nurtures.

In our compartmentalised way of viewing things, nation building would

appear primarily under politics and would centre around women in politics, and women's voting patterns. The question I would like to pose is how women can play any healthy, positive and continuous role in nation building when their very survival is in question. We are not here referring to the tiny minority of 'visible' women in politics, bureaucracy and in certain other spheres. We are talking of the millions of ordinary women doomed to be poor and without identity. Ensuring them

the right to live as independent, respect-worthy, fearless citizens of a free, democratic and secular nation is the beginning of nation-building. How does it work today? What really are the forces at play?

The adverse sex-ratio persisting in the country is a much discussed topic. Female infanticide, pre-natal sex determination tests or amniocentesis, which have ceased to be a purely urban phenomena, have come as a boon to greedy medical practitioners. Women are thus denied the right not only to live, but also to be born.

What is the relevance of marriage and family while discussing problems of nation building and renaissance? There is a high wall that keeps the domestic and public spheres separate.

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वही प्यार

वही मुस्कान

और

वही

स्वाद।

In general, media portrayal of women is not that of positive womanhood. A self-confident, dignified and forward looking woman is yet to emerge.

undervalued and unrecorded. But women remain unaware of this and its consequences.

5. Studies have reiterated that the overall impact of the development policies followed so far are increasing the marginalisation and impoverishment of large sections. The harshness of this is mostly borne by women.

6. Science and technology claiming to be neutral have shown ignorance and insensitivity to women's inherited knowledge and the wisdom and ability to cope with situations.

7. The institutions of marriage and family are not based on equality and have fetters which are more binding on women than on men.

9. The series of legislations since independence to ensure justice to the people or to 'protect' women specifically have not, by and large, served the purpose because of legal loopholes, faulty and half-hearted implementation, the cumbersome nature of the legal system, women's ignorance of these legislations and their inability to use them in their favour.

We believe that all is not well there and that it needs restructuring. It is all the more urgent if women are to take part in large numbers in the tremendous and complex task of restructuring our society.

The domestic sphere has been treated as a purely private affair on which public gaze should not fall. It is projected as a woman's world, where she reigns. As a result there are women and men who think that 'too much of womens' lib' would upset the serenity and tranquility of the family which is considered to be the shock absorber of the disquiet and turbulence in the outside world.

Managing the complex and difficult tasks of running a home is mostly a woman's job. Much has been written on the double or multiple burden women shoulder. The tasks women do at home, and which are taken for granted and called domestic chores take a lot of time, energy and involve management ability. Non-recognition of these facts adversely affects women in many ways. For one, their knowledge of the world outside remains narrow. It is not uncommon to hear many women who are employed say: "We have to do ten times more work than our male colleagues to get our work recognised". So long as the dominant thinking in society is that womens' life is within the home, and her coming out of it is exceptional or an aberration, it is difficult for women to remove the many inhibitions and restraints they have been conditioned to for ages. We are all familiar too, with the problem of domestic violence. And many of us know that there are even among those men with a 'progressive' public face and 'successful' public life, several unhelpful sons, oppressive husbands and indifferent fathers.

By saying all this I am trying to portray women as flawless angels. They are an integral segment of the wider system and adapt themselves to the demands of the system. That system survives by keeping people one against another. As opportunities are limited and patronage and favours become part of the system, a few women, however small in number they might be, will enter the system and get entwined in its machinations. But the majority are outside the system, though not free from the system. They include the poor, illiterate women and the literate but ignorant women from not

so poor homes. All of them evolve strategies to protest, or survive. They do not, indeed cannot, always resort to a straight forward show of resentment or demand for their rights. It is worthwhile to probe the forms in which women protest or evade irksome situations.

Before ending this section let me make it clear that those of us who ask for the unveiling of the domestic



A large number of middle class women appear to be satisfied with the 'achievements' of their husbands.

curtain are not for the destabilisation of an intimate social unit like the family. We believe that all is not well there and that it needs restructuring. It is all the more urgent if women are to take part in large numbers in the tremendous and complex task of restructuring our society.

Discrimination, humiliation and neglect are the lot of all women. True, from among the middle class a small number of women succeed in education, employment or public life. They enjoy some amount of freedom and mobility. They also develop a new awareness about themselves, the society in which they live and the world at large. But we do not see this spreading or percolating in any big way. A large number of middle class women appear to be satisfied with the 'achievements' of their husbands. This satisfaction with a 'reflected glory' and an increasing desire to keep up with the Joneses erases from their minds any desire to develop

an independent personality and thinking. I would again say that the media plays up to this.

It is also a fact that most of us, women and men find the status quo convenient. We are very often scared to see the reality and to look beyond. By and large most of us prefer the safe path.

History offers us abundant proof to show that women have never been found wanting when the call came during wars or struggles for independence. So, to involve them in the processes of nation building and a renaissance is not impossible. But there is a significant difference between getting a section of the middle class into these processes and involving large masses of women in the simultaneous processes of their own emancipation. If we are to learn from history and experience, the one lesson that should be is that womens' entry into the processes of nation building should be simultaneously tied to restructuring the entire society with all its segments like the family, workplace, organisations and associations.

We cannot make a beginning without asking fundamental questions about concepts like equality and freedom. Not just in the realms of polity but at the very human interactive level. Let us not look at these words as clichés as they have come to be. With all that has happened in India over the last fifty years it is time to invest these words with power and seek fresh understanding and clarity. This involves painful readjustments and not just with words in seminar halls. ☞

K. Saradamoni is a leading scholar on womens' issues.

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ALL WOMEN PANCHAYATS: A STEP TOWARDS REAL EMPOWERMENT

“Once we decide to do something we will, come what may” said Parvati, a peasant woman from a village with an all-women panchayat in Maharashtra.

The phenomenon of all women panchayats, though unintended, is a direct fallout of the Constitution Seventy-third Amendment Act, 1992. There are thirteen such all women panchayats in Maharashtra, though continuing research and monitoring of the elected representatives is taking place in only nine of them. According to one estimate, Madhya Pradesh has seven all-women panchayats, followed by West Bengal and Tripura, one each taking the number of all-women panchayats to twenty two. Interestingly, in these three states all-women panchayats have come up in tribal and scheduled caste areas. For example, according to one study, the SC and ST population constitutes 50% of the total population in the area under the Kultikri panchayat in West Bengal. Similarly, the entire population of the area covered by the all-women panchayat in Tripura comprises of SCs (592) and STs (785).

In Maharashtra, migration of males to Bombay is the reported reason for this phenomenon in some cases. In most cases all-women panchayats were

constituted either because the government wanted it to be that way, as in case of Kultikri, or the village elders decided on the consensus candidates (Maharashtra).

Are the all-women panchayats proxy panchayats? Some studies conducted in Kultikri (West Bengal), and also in Maharashtra, show that the answer is a firm 'no'. In most cases, these panchayats have taken up a number of developmental activities affecting the lives of the villagers, in general, and that of the females in particular. For instance, the women leaders of Kultikri have taken up several income-augmenting schemes such as waste land development, leasing of small ponds for aquaculture, organisation of loan repayment fairs, distribution of joint 'pattas', construction of roads and tubewells through utilisation of the money allocated under JRY (Jawahar Rozgar Yojana). They have also been able to implement some welfare schemes such as those of pension for the old and disabled persons, distribution of free books to the poor students, distribution of houses constructed under the Indira Awas Yojana, etc. The most important achievement of this panchayat is the fulfillment of one hundred percent literacy target in its area. The Kultikri panchayat has also been able to hold monthly meetings regularly. Even though the established social and economic power structure is still strong, a new set of political leadership has emerged in this panchayat and it has been chosen as one of the best panchayats in the district of Midnapur.

Similarly, the all-women panchayats in Maharashtra have

shown potential to function as agents of change. Several NGOs like Ralegan Siddhi, and political groups like Lal Nishan Party and Shetkari Sangathan are helping them in various ways. Some of the all-women panchayats have done commendable work and earned credit for it. The panchayat at Vitner has got for its village the title of Jyotibhai Phule village, which is given only to select villages with a high degree of performance in various fields. In this village, drinking water is available through taps and the incidence of alcoholism has considerably declined. This panchayat has also implemented the 'Laxmi Mukta' scheme under which women have been given land. But the most striking feature of this panchayat is the emergence of an effective leadership from amongst the elected women members.

In the Brahmangarh panchayat, Maharashtra, the elected women members have assumed power because most of the men in the area have migrated to Bombay. Even though men still have some say in the village affairs, the women have relatively more autonomy and they are taking decisions relating to the welfare activities of the panchayat. It is also heartening to note that the villagers are happy to have a performing all-women panchayat.

Tha all-women panchayats by and large have disproved the prevalent notion that women are always proxy candidates and are not capable of taking any independent decisions. ❧

Source: Bidyut Mohanty,
Institute of Social Sciences.

CENTRE FOR RESEARCH IN RURAL AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT (CRRID)

● The Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development was founded in October 1978 and was accorded national status by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), New Delhi in 1985. It is one of the twenty seven research institutes spread across the country. Since its inception, the Centre is engaged in socio-economic, demographic, cultural research projects, surveys, training programmes, conferences and seminars in some key areas of national development such as communalism, population studies, education, border area development, application of science and technology, transformation in Indian agriculture with special reference to the states in Northern India. In addition to this, the Centre also brings out an international quarterly, *Man and Development*, edited by Shri P.N. Haksar.

We are grateful to CRRID and Mr. Rashpal Malhotra for their support in facilitating this issue of THE EYE.

EDUCATING THE MARKET VERSUS THE MARKET OF EDUCATION

BHIM S. DAHIYA

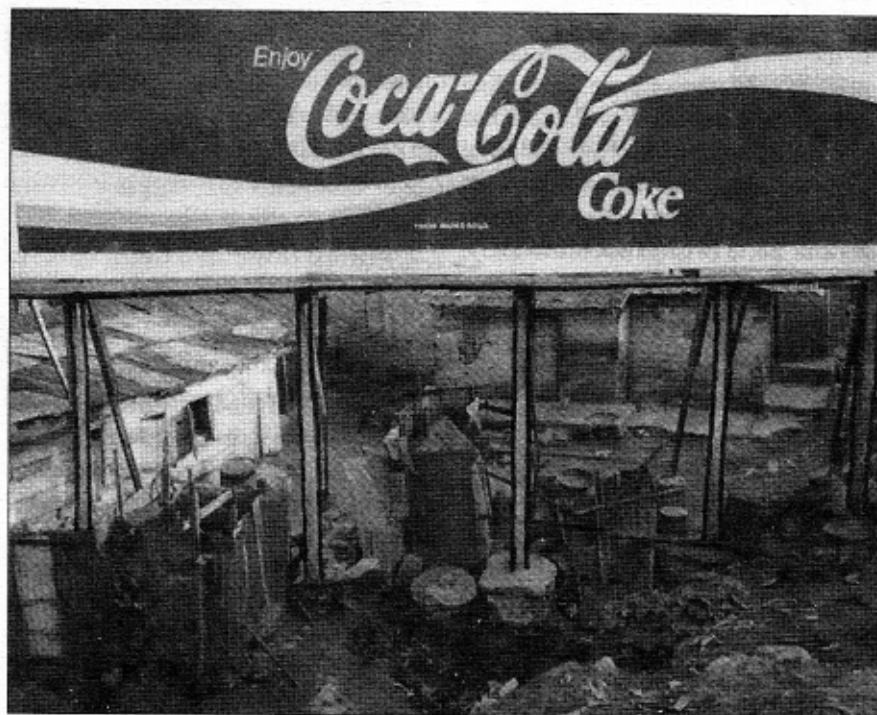
Some major developments of the last few years, particularly the switch-over to the new economic policy of liberalization, have brought about significant changes in our social life. On account of these changes, some of our earlier formulations about the state of Indian society and the priorities and strategies we had earlier worked out for its reconstruction have been rendered rather inadequate. It has, therefore, become imperative for us to recognise the over-all character of the changed situation in which we are placed today as a nation, and see how the tasks and priorities relating to the agenda of social reconstruction we had set before us in the fifties need to be re-defined in the new context.

In the multi-dimensional process of social change that we are recently witnessing, the economic, political and cultural aspects are all deeply intermixed and are interdependent. It may not, therefore, be fair to pull out a single factor and study its impact on a particular sphere of our social life, although this is what I perceive will have to do when I draw your attention to a restricted area of the subject and make a few preliminary observations on how the policy of economic liberalization has affected the educational scene, particularly the functioning system, and how it has influenced the general cultural environment in the country.

Let me make it clear that while I am sympathetic to the necessity for adopting the policy of economic liberalization and see its efficacy in undoing or

State-sponsored welfarism is being dismissed today as a wishy-washy form of idealism which should not be relied upon.

This elitist shift in our social philosophy, which the adoption of the policy of liberalization represents, becomes quite clear as soon as we turn away from the field of economics and focus our attention on the fields of education and culture.



The underprivileged have to face the pitiless logic of the market forces.

nullifying the negative consequences of the four-decade-long operation of a model of development in which the State played a pioneering role in the management of the country's economy and determined its direction and scope through a regime of controls and licences, I feel sad about the signals we are receiving now about the weakening of our commitment to the cause of the welfare of the poor and underprivileged sections of our society. Whatever be the advantages of the liberalization policy in the economic field in terms of

overcoming stagnation and providing a new fillip to our economy by bringing about an appreciable increase in its persistently sluggish rate of growth, it also marks a radical change in our social philosophy on account of which the emphasis has now shifted from the establishment of an egalitarian social order to the encouragement of technological innovation, increased efficiency and maximization of profits, leaving the underprivileged to face the rigours of the pitiless logic of the market forces to fend for themselves or perish.

The 'State - Welfarism' of the Nehruvian era had its own severe limitations, but its substitution by the free-market economy where all investments are strictly governed by the notions of profit-making and no priorities are fixed on the basis of long-term development needs is not the answer either. The policy of protective discrimination in favour of the disadvantaged groups is gradually discarded as a drag on our limited resources, public investment in areas like health and education has shrunk in proportion because this does not bring any immediate returns, and the entire gamut of economic activity is sought to be hitched to the world market even if this involves the risk of detaching it from the needs and requirements of a vast majority of people living in this country. This certainly betokens legitimizing the tendency of the successful to secede from the rest of society and delink themselves from those living in the morass of poverty, ignorance and disease. This growing tendency of elitism in our social philosophy as of pampering the consumer with a well-lined pocket is indicative of the decline in our idealistic fervour inherited from the Independence movement. State sponsorship of economic enterprises may have created many social problems, but the policy of liberalisation has unfortunately meant a wrongful shrinkage of the State's role as an active agent of social reconstruction. The State is being virtually reduced to the role of an umpire whose utmost duty is to ensure that the rules of the game are observed by all the players active in the market field. Under the changed paradigms for the functioning of the State, creating facilities for the health and education of all, building the infrastructure of roads, transport, communications and power, undertaking programmes of economic and social upliftment through eradication of poverty and unemployment and the spreading of education, no longer count among the serious obligations of the State towards its citizens. All these tasks are being gradually handed over to interested



Our participation in culture tends to be on the pattern of being a consumer of commodity. The result is that culture tends to become a leisure-time mode of refreshment. Whatever makes us feel relaxed, whatever gives us momentary excitement, whatever helps us overcome our tedium, all that is looked upon as culture.

private entrepreneurs who would make investments in the service sector and provide efficient services to those who can pay for them, or to those philanthropic elements and voluntary agencies who reflect the conscience of the society. State-sponsored welfarism is being dismissed today as a wishy-washy form of idealism which should not be relied upon. This elitist shift in our social philosophy, which the adoption of the policy of liberalization represents, becomes quite clear as soon as we turn away from the field of economics and focus our attention on the fields of education and culture.

When education became in the fifties an integral part of the developmental efforts of the State, there was a strong emphasis on its rapid expansion at all levels. The government allocated more and more funds for opening new colleges and

establishing new universities for strengthening teaching and research. Greater social relevance of the curricula and courses of study were emphasised. What was that idea of social relevance at that time? Let's say that it was not narrowly utilitarian, for education was viewed as a challenging enterprise for the expansion of intellectual horizons, for the cultivation of a rational outlook, for the refinement of our human sensibility. The current thinking on education has unfortunately put a check on the further expansion of higher education, curtailing funds available from the State agencies, narrowing down the meaning of social relevance, making it almost a synonym of sale-value in the market. This jettisoning of the State responsibility for providing the necessary resources, restricting its access to those who have the capacity to pay, has created new problems and challenges for educational administrators, such as vice-chancellors of universities. Of course, making education an entirely State sponsored activity engendered its own set of travails. Utter dependence for funds on government agencies had led to excessive bureaucratization of procedures and structures as also interference from the political sphere in the day-to-day functioning of educational institutions. It had also generated a spirit of passivity among teachers as all policy initiatives and powers had moved into the hands of the State bureaucracy or the top brass of the university administration. The spirit of apathy produced among teachers on this account led to a serious deterioration in the quality of their involvement in the teaching activity. The stagnation and routinization of education which this spirit of passivity and alienation produced had posed a serious threat to our educational enterprise.

As a consequence of the awareness of distortions produced by making the State the prime agent of social reconstruction that has come to us with the shift towards liberalization, we have

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become more keen to break the sloth and take initiatives at our own level. We have been forced to realize now that our courses have to be upgraded, our pedagogic skills and our knowledge of the latest developments in our chosen disciplines have to be continuously updated. The shock of 'recognition' we have gone through has also made us aware of the walls

of insulation we had created between the academic world and the larger public in the midst of which we continued to live in our enclosed assured space. We have now painfully realized that we shall have to give up the old habits of utter dependency on the State for funds as well as for initiatives and innovations. This means we shall have to establish live contacts with the larger community for raising funds as well as for seeking new inspirations. We shall also have to maintain and nourish institutional connection with our old students. The general lethargy and isolation of the academia have to be broken. All these can be viewed as some of the salutary effects of liberalization on the functioning of educational institutions.

The more disturbing aspect of the liberalisation policy, however, is to look upon education merely in terms of the marketability of products, reducing it to the status of a commodity... Any meaningful system of education transcends the limits of a mere transfer of informations, ideas or technical skills. It inevitably entails a deeper engagement at the level of sentiments and emotions, ethics and morals, which distinguish man from machine.

institutions, not in a position to undertake energetic measures for raising funds from alternative sources.

The more disturbing aspect of the liberalisation policy, however, is to look upon education merely in terms of the marketability of products, reducing it to the status of a commodity. Even if the pressures of the market cannot be ignored and should always be kept in view, even if the idea of social relevance of education is taken to mean employability of students it will be disastrous for a society to reduce education to the status of a commodity. The vocabulary of the marketplace is unfortunately being increasingly applied in the field of education compelling us to think more and more in terms of production of usable skills,

On the other side of the scale, the negative effects of liberalization are too serious to be ignored. The increasing resource crunch created by the new notion that education is not an obligation of the State but a business in the service sector to be rendered to competing users, does threaten to paralyse the functioning of many educational

promotion of investible human resources, and introduction of informational and managerial inputs. This is a disturbing trend which must be resisted. We must not yield to the pressure of this type of thinking, which has been made fashionable in this era of liberalization in which paramount importance is given to the logic of the market place. Education, to my mind, cannot be reduced into a business transaction where people compete with one another as customers for a limited purpose of making profit through exchange of marketable goods. Any meaningful system of education transcends the limits of a mere transfer of informations, ideas or technical skills. It inevitably entails a deeper engagement at the level of sentiments and emotions, ethics and morals, which distinguish man from machine.

This brings me to the point where we should talk about the impact of liberalization on our larger cultural environment. It has to do with the moral order ensconced in a world of science and technology. Whereas liberalization breaks insularity and promotes cosmopolitanism and removes stagnation and orthodoxy, it also tends at the same time to bring culture down to the level of mere banal entertainment. Our participation in culture tends to be on the pattern of being a consumer of commodity. The result is that culture tends to become a leisure-time mode of refreshment. Whatever makes us feel relaxed, whatever gives us momentary excitement, whatever helps us overcome our tedium, all that is looked upon as culture.

The pressures being exerted today by the market forces tend to reduce culture to mere forms to be appropriated by detaching them from the processes through which both these forms as well as the substance they contain have been produced by a collectivity. Liberalization injects consumerish tendencies in our cultural environment. It, therefore, cheapens, degrades and homogenizes culture. Since as consumers we are generally swayed by the immediate or short-term requirements and needs, liberalization also tends to narrow our mental

horizons. Culture, both at the level of individual and society relates to that particular sense of being human we visualize for ourselves, to that idea of meaningful existence of self-fulfilment. This visualization of ourselves as being 'human' gets flattened out and narrowed down in a market-dominated social set-up. Whatever is not covered under the market-mechanism tends to be obliterated from our minds. This blankness or obtuseness linked with the valorization of the market forces is a really serious threat to culture as having only surface and no depth. It is true that few of us today choose to opt out of the world dominated by the values of the market, but in order to preserve the sense of a rich and meaningful culture we must develop a critical intelligence which can pierce through surface and see what lies underneath. The phenomenal growth of information technology and the consequent expansion of the electronic media have made all the more necessary the cultivation of a critical faculty to be aware of that part of the truth which is hidden or kept back and shows up the inadequacy of the half-truths being shown to us. It is only by cultivating this critical intelligence

through the education in the humanities that we can escape the damage caused by the barrage of propaganda through the electronic media.

Another danger posed by the ascendancy of the market forces and its projection through the mass media is its sponsored concept of our identity as individuals living in some sort of private space very much in the present moment, being incapable of or unwilling to share the larger concerns of a common interest and significance. This type of purblind and smug individualism will erode our humanity and degrade our culture to a disturbingly low level. The task, therefore, before the centres of higher learning of India today is to maintain the discipline of the humanities in the midst of the gigantic plethora of technology and business disciplines which have come to dominate our campuses as well as our consciousness. The effort in question is just like saving one's soul in the midst of a carnival of senses. Let's, therefore, find a way to absorb the new disciplines of science and technology, business and management in the traditional structure of liberal education which

lays emphasis on the education of the mind rather than the acquiring of information and skill. Let's also find a way to withstand the onslaught of the tawdry on the beautiful. This concept of culture as well as education emerged in modern times from the movement of the renaissance in Europe, which held above all, the values of rationalism and secularism, of individual dignity and freedom, of civil behaviour and personal accomplishment. It were these very values which inspired the leading personalities of the Indian Freedom Movement and the Indian renaissance. Today, these values are under attack. We need to retain these values, without remaining out of time with our times. The new political and economic orders shall have to reconcile themselves to our (now old) cultural and educational values. How we do that is a matter of debate and concern for all of us. ☞

Illustrations : Ripin Kalra

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HAVE SOME DECENCY ! CRAWL IN LINE, WILL YOU ?

PROMOTING 'MODERN' TECHNOLOGY

A NEW TOOL FOR NEO-COLONIALISM

DINESH MOHAN



Is the slogan 'leap-frogging into the 21st century' really as apolitical in its approach to development as it is made out to be? Will it spur the young people of India into working toward an environment that encourages innovation, hard work, sacrifice and even dreaming? From where has this new ideology emerged?

In the colonial period, when nations projected their supremacy it was in terms of military might and scientific machismo. The military might frightened colonial people into submission and the scientific achievements of the oppressors convinced the oppressed of their own 'innate' inferiority. As a result, the colonised even felt it necessary to explain their religions and rituals in terms more relevant to the religion of the colonisers — Christianity. In nineteenth century India, for example, there were Hindu and Muslim reformers (Raja Ramohun Roy, Swami

Vivekanand, Syed Ahmed Khan) who found it necessary to rationalise their religions and make them look 'respectable'. So the dominance of the West encompassed all aspects of human thought and action in the early part of this century.

Within fifty years, however, most parts of the world achieved political independence and many newly formed nation states made tremendous efforts to assert their independence and self-reliance. The West now had to evolve new ideologies of colonisation which would appear to be politically neutral. This most effective new form was technology — technology as an ideology. And almost helplessly, most of us in the Third World have fallen into the trap of conceiving and portraying our goals in terms of new technologies and successes in 'fundamental' research.

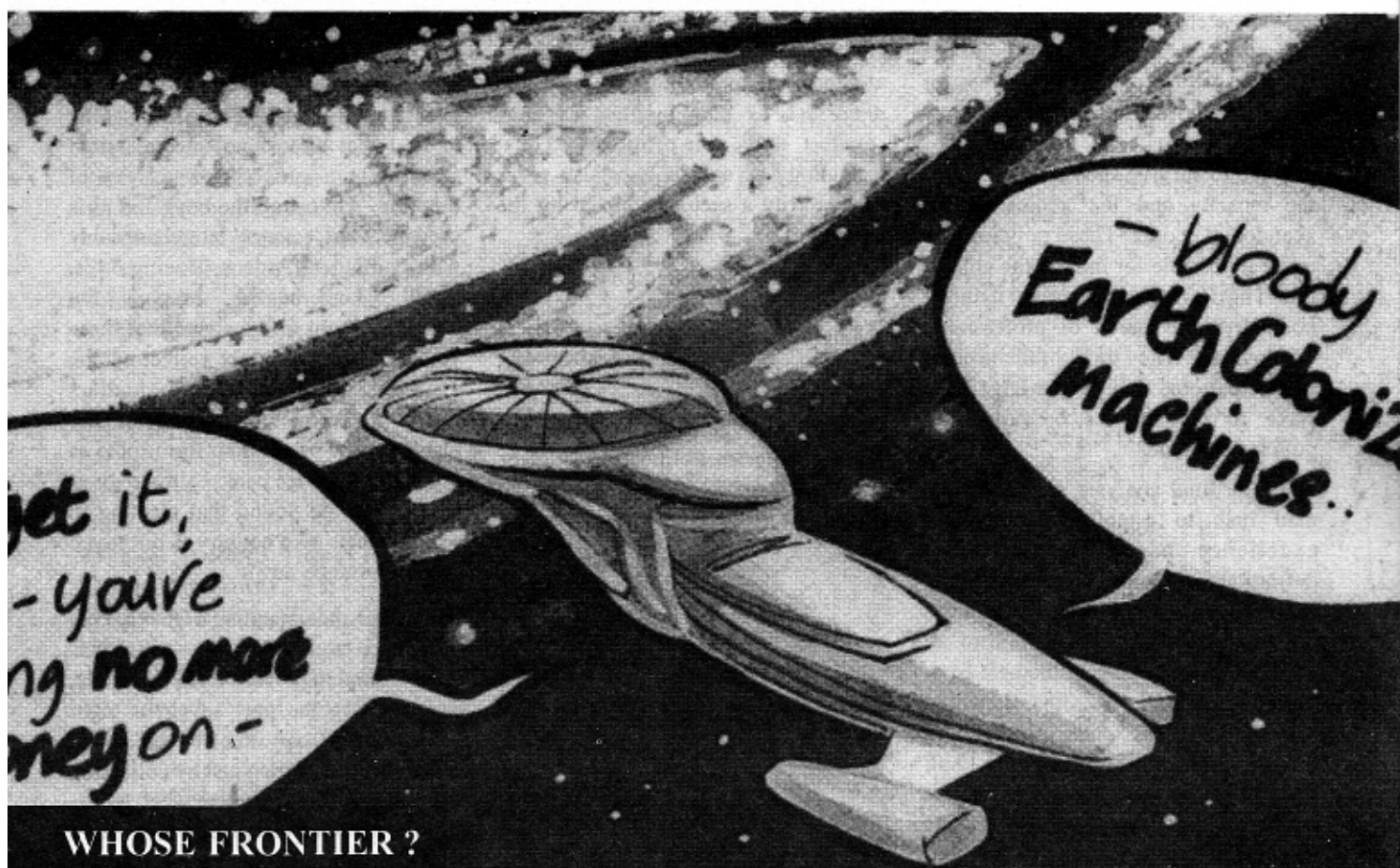
Technological development and the directions basic research takes are intricately linked to the self-perceptions and goals of a society's influential bourgeoisie. Thus much of the technology developed in the west today

must automatically be designed for the middle-classes with a great deal of leisure time on their hands. This is the science and technology which we in the Third World have come to regard as 'modern'. And, by extension, the evolution of these technologies and research associated with them have now become, for us, the only tests of any nation's viability for the future. Thus we end up measuring our own future prospects purely in terms of our ability to cope with these 'emerging' technologies and our perceptions of their role in the 'Information Age'.

The acceptance of this 'ideology of technology' leads us to two different kinds of simplistic options. One, to move towards re-capturing a storied pre-colonial cultural glory shored-up by various obscurantist beliefs. And two, to participate in the game of catching up with the West. Most nations in the non-communist Third World play a schizophrenic game with both these options together.

At one level we have very real fear that we will never be able to 'catch-up'





WHOSE FRONTIER ?

and this makes us resort to re-defining rules of our own which would automatically make us morally superior. So we can go 'Yankee-bashing', riding our spiritual high-horses. That is why the decision-makers in India have to keep repeating the need for 'spirituality' when they promote modern technology.

Many Third World nations are highly plural societies made up of groups with different languages and cultural identities. The result of technological insecurity in such societies is because a single dominant group within the society forces its own concept of purity onto the other groups. This is certainly one of the many important factors fuelling ethnic tensions in Third World nations.

On the other hand, when our other self pushes for catching up, then we coin slogans about 'leap-frogging into the twenty-first century'. On the face of it this slogan gives the impression of being very secular and pushing for a dynamic fast moving society. What it really does, however, is justify and deploy what are extremely non-

egalitarian forces for change.

The initial step in this is making 'modern' synonymous with 'western'. We end up defining progress as the acquisition and production of 'modern' goods — 'modern' not being what we need tomorrow, but what the West produced yesterday.

The next step in the process towards increased inequality comes when we apply this perception of 'modernity' in an unequal society to the task of development. Consider the education sector: once we have decided that 'catching-up' and participation in all the so-called 'emerging' or 'frontier' areas of research are our main concerns, we have automatically elected to ensure that at least a few citizens in an

We end up defining progress as the acquisition and production of 'modern' goods — 'modern' not being what we need tomorrow, but what the West produced yesterday.

unequal society be singled out for special treatment. This is done by promoting the following:

1) At least a small number of boys and girls get 'good' primary and secondary education in expensive school regardless of what happens to everyone else.

2) There exist a few elite institutions of higher learning which follow curricula identical to those in the West.

3) Research priorities be set independent of the society's actual productive needs.

4) The education process be long and expensive.

5) Our educational policies follow a triage management style normally reserved for the battle field. Specifically (a) only those who can compete with western intellectuals be given the maximum priority at all levels of education, (b) those who can help these contestants be given the basic minimum survival opportunity, and (c) those who have no chance of participating in this endeavour be left to fend for themselves.

This scenario is not abstract. The educational establishment in India has largely functioned along these lines for some time now. The fact that so many that are left to fend for themselves manage to survive speaks volumes for the tenacity and the genius of the abandoned people. These policies also make it possible for mainly the elite of the Third World to cross national boundaries in search of professional employment. They think of themselves as international beings and have little stake in the success or failure of policies at home.

In the final analysis, however, this mad rush to establish enclaves of excellence based on outsiders' definitions and priorities ends up being its own booby-trap. Since these policies do not involve the participation of all people, we cannot select the best from our populations. So this lopsided selection process ends up sending many intrinsically mediocre and complacent people to our best centres of research, and excellence continues to elude us.

Unfortunately, when we adopt 'technology as an ideology' we also set in motion many other forces detrimental to our societies. For example, when any local group opposes a large technological project on humanitarian grounds, the concerned group can very easily be dismissed as anti-progress or even anti-national. The proposal for setting up a testing range of Baliapal in Orissa and the bulldozing of the Narmada Valley Project are good examples of the tendency. Similarly, the poor and the disadvantaged are now easily viewed as impediments to progress. The elite also comes to view any ideology aimed at a more equal income distribution as coming in the way of the acquisition of a few more technological toys. A fancy international airport is naturally preferred to a more efficient city bus system. Ultimately, because the poor are seen as obstacles to modernity even they can be seen as anti-national.

More alarmingly, 'the poor' are often not all that ethnically neutral in old composite societies. The poor in many societies are also members of

minority communities. This ethnic angle to poverty makes it fairly easy for a dominant community to label the minorities as communities, as anti-science and anti-progress. Thus, technology as an ideology also gives the majority a secular whip to hit the minorities.

In the preceding paragraphs I have tried to analyse how the pursuit of technology as an ideology in fact influences political and socio-economic directions for our societies. I have also argued that in the name of technology a non-egalitarian political direction is taken without an overt statement to that effect.

Every one knows that good novels are not written just by collecting the most difficult and newest words from a dictionary and then ordering a linguist to arrange them well. But this is the method our leaders have chosen to promote science and technology in India.

In my interaction with young people around the country over the past few years, I get the feeling that they are suffering a tremendous loss of hope. There is little sense of pride in anything we do now. This certainly cannot be blamed on them. It is my impression that this has happened because science is being sold as a commodity and not viewed as a part of our process intricately linked with the social and cultural movements of our civilisation. Secondly, we keep setting our goals and aspirations to achieve targets set by those in the West instead of aiming for things which are do-able and appear to be obviously for the good of the majority in this country. This automatically makes people lose hope and be certain of failure.

When our leaders talk about science and technology they project inventions and end products, and the media highlights the new concerns of the west like AIDS, superconductors, test-tube babies, genetic engineering etc. This attitude has filtered down to the

young. In a national essay competition for high school students one of the topics given was *Science is Fun*. While evaluating the entries it was astonishing to find that almost no one talked of science as a process, as a way of thinking. Almost all the boys and girls used the word 'science' interchangeably with computers, videos, Boeing 747s, satellites and nuclear weapons. On further thought one realised that these young people are only reflecting the attitudes of our present leaders in India. A remark by a minister justifying the brain drain from India as establishing 'brain banks' abroad gives a signal to the young that electing to work in their own country is not given any importance now.

It is the understanding of the process of science and technology which has been completely subverted in India, especially in the past seven or eight years. Every one knows that good novels are not written just by collecting the most difficult and newest words from a dictionary and then ordering a linguist to arrange them well. But this is the method our leaders have chosen to promote science and technology in India — select the 'latest' problems and concerns of the west, buy the expensive foreign equipment that goes with them, identify 'top-ranking' professionals, arrange foreign collaborations and then command them to do 'good' science in 'frontier' areas.

By giving science and technology this value-free exalted position, and by behaving as if this had nothing to do with political biases and social distortions, the people in power are trying to put themselves beyond democratic control. If science is presented to the people as a purely 'technical' matter, without any social or political implications there need be no public discussion of scientific and technological policy decisions. Free enterprise and *laissez-faire* policies can be ushered in much more easily. It is therefore not surprising that a large number of the senior-most policy makers in India today are either ex-employees of organisations like the World Bank and the IMF or have very close associations with them.

If Third World societies want to survive with self-respect, and if we want to move towards more human systems we have to expose the political nature of these so-called technological policies. In addition we should be able to design and propose alternative political ideologies and socio-economic systems which are based on clearly stated human goals and not on the acquisition of technological artefacts.

To achieve this alternative society we have to think of different electoral processes which ensure representation but reduce the influences of powerful lobbies like large business houses and multinational corporations on the electoral processes. These systems will have to move away from the idealised concept of two political parties and homogeneous populations. The new political structures and ideologies would have to build in systems which automatically reduce the influence of the dominant power centres around the world.

It is possible that as we move towards these newer structures we may

be able to deal with uncertainty more confidently, and not depend on solutions taken from elsewhere. And we may not be left with any choices to make unless we use all possible tools of thought to design and shape our future.

We have to discover newer ways of doing things and producing things so



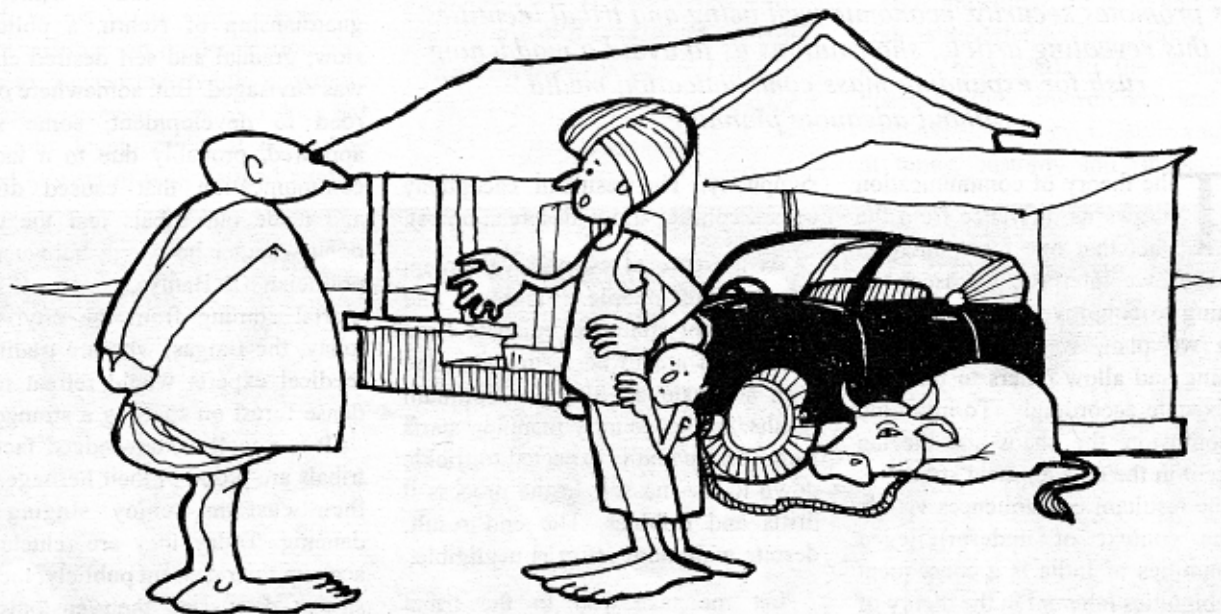
RIPIN KALRA

that we can exchange goods with each other on more equal terms. To do this we have to design working systems for scientists which suit our cultures better and allow the average scientists to function more productively. We have

to realise that political systems which work well in the US, tend to 'reverse their phase' when implemented in Third World countries. That is many systems which function as democratic processes there, become oppressive when transplanted here. The same could be true for science systems also.

It is time to look inwards and define the future in non-technological terms. Once we do this, independent science and technology policies may follow more naturally from the non-technological choices we make, and give us an escape hatch from the present determinism exercised on us by 'technology as an ideology'. ❧

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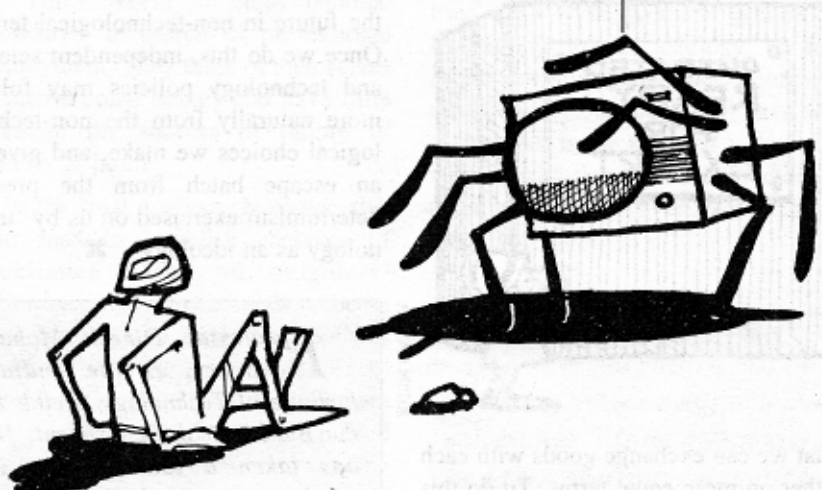
THIS CAR WE INVENTED RUNS ON DRINKING WATER BUT THEN IN OUR VILLAGE WE DON'T HAVE DRINKING WATER

MASS COMMUNICATION

WHO ARE THE MASSES ?

A LOOK AT COMMUNICATION TRENDS ON TRIBES

SHALINA MEHTA



How has the much touted 'communication revolution' affected our non-urbanised rural population, particularly our tribals ? The rationale of interaction is diffusion, but for them it has been a case of unilateral absorption. We assume that the tribal lifestyle is static but an analysis of their history or oral tradition reveals their ability to generate social change, but at their own pace.

The tribal world view is 'orthogenetic', that is change that follows a non sporadic defined direction. Whereas, the modern 'heterogenetic' view impels change inspired by current trends. The author questions the validity of this and enquires as to how this promotes security, economic well being and tribal identities. In this revealing article, she cautions us to avoid a maddening rush for expanding mass communication media without adequate planning.

The theory of communication draws its inference from the fact that one must interpret and when we interpret, we ascribe a meaning to cognitive structure. Thus, when we plan, we implement that meaning and allow others to interpret and execute accordingly. To my mind the confusion, the chaos and the lag apparent in the development strategies and the resultant consequences visible in the context of underprivileged communities of India is a consequent of ambiguities inherent in the theory of communication. The mega planning and macro-micro structures of implementation lack co-ordination and

symphony. The resultant cacophony causes conflict and widespread unrest.

At the core of every development process are people. Planning and development strategies emanate from within and are to be re-implemented with adequate dressing for optimum results. In our country planning starts from the top and is expected to trickle down to the masses. In the process it drifts and dribbles. The end result, despite mammoth effort is negligible.

Let me take you to the tribal heartland of Madhya Pradesh. Populations that we are studying at the moment have been earlier reported and

analysed by the pioneers in the field of Tribal Anthropology in India, namely, Stephen Fuchs and Verrier Elwin. Elwin's classic titled *Baigas* was published in 1936. The concluding remarks in this book led to the formation of 'national parks', and consequently for years, anthropologists were accused of preserving tribals like museum exhibits for the sake of their own bread and butter. Years later, Elwin himself declined ever having propagated tribal reserves. Lack of scientific communication, organised thinking and open debate on this issue created a stalemate as far as the policy of tribal development was concerned. Tribal population under missionary influence acquired education and economic independence to an extent but at the same time suffered an identity crisis. Mizos, Nagas, Garos, Mishwis are characteristic examples of this religion based economic development. The tribals of Central India however remained isolated, partly because of the protective attitude of Hindu zealots and largely because of the tribal withdrawal due to unplanned inter-cultural contact. It is sad to see that the Raj Gonds of Central Asia who had an empire and who enjoyed every comfort of an affluent group are driven to identify themselves as poor farmers. Independent India never desired to push back its tribals. Under the guardianship of Nehru, a policy of slow, gradual and self desired change was envisaged. But, somewhere on the road to development, some snags appeared, probably due to a lack of communication that caused distrust and made our tribals fear the urban *babu* whether he was a bureaucrat, a politician, a Baniya, or any other mortal coming from the city. Even today, the Baigas, who are traditional medical experts would retreat to the dense forest on spotting a stranger.

It is a well acknowledged fact that tribals are proud of their heritage, love their customs, enjoy singing and dancing. Today they are reluctant to acclaim their descent publicly, they are shy of discussing their customs and traditions openly and their much adored dance and music have become stage performances. The erstwhile challenges

posed by their environment and habitat were natural to them; but the threat engineered by man-made technology and the structure of needs created by the influx of modernisation has left the average tribal feeling unsure and insecure.

The rationale of interaction is diffusion, but for tribals it has been a case of unilateral absorption. Values, habits, customs of the developed elite are imposed and enforced on tribal folk without any sensitivity to their needs and ability to acquire them. Social development is expected to precede economic development. Social change becomes a constant and modalities of development inconsequential. Very little attention is paid to Mahbub-ul-Haq's observation that 'development styles should be such as to build development around people rather than people around development'. Planners have pre-conceived ideas as to how 'developed' individuals should behave. When models for development are evolved, their empirical viability is neither pre-tested nor provided any elasticity to accommodate varying needs and situations. Somehow for years our planners have been interpreting traditionalism and development as synonymous; not realising that 'under-development is a created condition, not the original state in the evolutionary process.' The alternative paradigm which seems to be emerging in the recent writings on modernisation also tends to suggest that 'while economic growth is necessary per se it does not constitute development. It has to be linked to a set of well defined human,

social and cultural objectives. Economic growth has to be understood as an instrument of human development.'

Anthropological analysis or any studies of the 'other' community are victims of categories of 'ascription' and 'identification'. Common lexical luxuries that one takes with the other communities are often misleading and misrepresentative. Calling tribals 'jungle' or 'wild' has been accepted as normative categorisation. The author of the 1984 reprint of *Wild Tribes of India* (originally by Rowney), Shoshee Chunder Dutt writes:

'The Asul, or unmixed Gonds...live the life of wild men there, and have all the virtues of the wild life in more or less degree... The Gonds who live in the open country are, on the contrary remarkable only for their meanness, cowardice and servility.'

Ascribing identificational labels such as *jungle*, wild, dangerous, cruel, robbers, have generated unwarranted fear complexes amongst

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a section of the general population. But most often they are shy, hospitable people, curious to learn from strangers but apprehensive of exploitation in their hands. At the same time the outsider, the economic exploiter attempts to project a negative image of the tribal being, so as to discourage an average researcher or investigator from reaching them. By doing this the economic exploiter controls competition and repels challenges to his authority.

Attributing a static lifestyle to tribals is rather presumptuous on our part. Historical analysis of their oral tradition and culture clearly demonstrate the changing pattern of their life and their ability to generate social change. However, very little attention is ever paid to the internal innovative abilities of the native populations. Somehow the majority of practising anthropologists like any average common individual tend to regard tribals as less intelligent, endowed with low levels of aspiration, incapable of experimenting and unable to evolve on their own. Thus the 'urban *babu*', trained scholar and the bureaucracy engaged in development, derives vicarious pleasure in enforcing their values and ideology along with whatever benefits of developed technology they are prepared to part with.

It is imperative for us to understand and acknowledge the tribals have always responded to the challenges posed by their environment and have changed technology, lifestyle and even at times, customs and rituals. Their

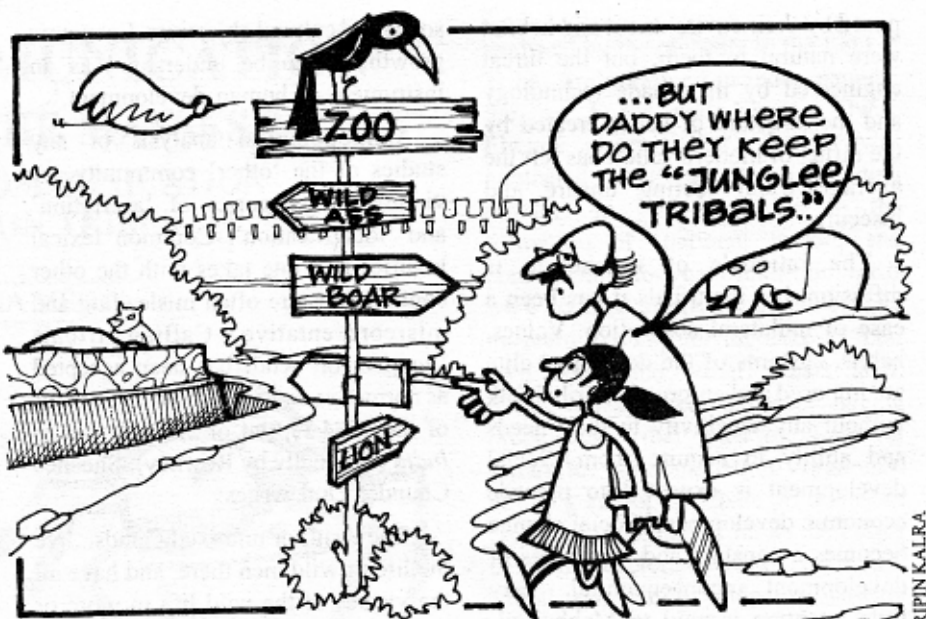


DANCING FOR THEMSELVES: MOHAN KHOKAR

response to development has been conditioned by their world view and needs, i.e it is orthogenetic (the theory of evolution which proposes that variations follow a defined direction and are not merely sporadic). Thus very little structural change or dramatic deviation becomes apparent in tribal life. This is responsible for the general impression that tribals have not changed and are incapable of innovating and thus external agents and outside pressure should be applied to generate a heterogenetic form of change (i.e change which is more spontaneous, inspired by current trends) which in essence would bring about structural change and lead to faster growth and development.

Communication Trends and Heterogenetic Process of Change

Tolas — the little hamlets in this region present a picture of unique apparent homogeneity. If ever an appropriate yardstick for measuring poverty is evolved, most of these tribal households would find placements at par. Patterns of living being similar, habitats look alike. The only significant difference is in the practice of building household clusters. The Gonds regard themselves as different from the Baigas and Kols form separate clusters. In addition to this the Gonds and the Baigas have a slightly different style of dressing. Both Baiga men and women wear their *dhotis* above the knee and Gond men and women wear it below the knee. The Baigas in general appear to be shy and introvert as compared to their Gond counterparts who are willing to communicate and occasionally take pride in claiming their royal heritage. Otherwise both the major tribal groups of this region share similar eating habits, social customs and ethos.



However, villages which were nearer to the towns and were easily approachable by road showed symbols of so called 'development' or modernisation in the form of transistors, trousers, cosmetics, costume jewellery and stainless steel utensils.

As for channels of communication, virtually no village in the interior or in

An assumption that everything in the tribal world needs a remedy is false. We all know (but we prefer to ignore) that some of the tribal values especially with regard to status of women, divorce, widow re-marriage and female infanticide are boons which no process of development or social change should ever erode. It is here that communication should be looked at 'scientifically'.

presumptuous and immediate means of heterogenetic change. Post and telecommunication services in the remote areas are purely token services. Even for an ordinary telegram to reach district headquarters it requires about four to seven days and a registered letter more than a month.

The most crucial element while planning implementation of development strategies is to assess the need to control and filter the information which is desired to be transmitted. An unwarranted expansion of mass communication media, without taking into account the socio-economic background of the people to be affected, can cause social catastrophes, enhance frustration and invite dissent. It takes little to raise expectations but involves a lot to fulfill them — 'studies have indicated that messages intended for downward transmission by urban oriented experts were found ineffective at their destination points. They have also proved that between the traditional and modern societies, communication flow is not an easy and smooth process' Take for example the tribals of our field area. They live today in a traditional environment relishing their *kodo* and *kutki* for meals, enjoying home-made liquor made of the *mahua* fruit which is grown abundantly in the region, performing *karwa* in the evenings to the beat of the *damru*, *nagada*, *timki* and *gudum*. Dancing and drinking till the early hours of the



the heart of the forest has any access to modern mass communication infrastructure. Few houses have acquired transistor radios. It was on 18th April, 1989 that a T.V. transmission channel was inaugurated in district Mandla. Thus there was no question of remote villages having any access to the most

morning keep them warm in the severest of winters and helps them to relax. Few hours of sleep after that in utter exhaustion and exhilaration and then back to work next morning. There was no eight to nine thirty satellite transmission till recently to glue them to the small screen.

During these four years that I have been associated with this field area I have gathered ample evidence to prove that alien values, norms and lifestyle, in essence the 'superlatives of transmission' have made an indent amongst the people living at the periphery of the district town. Unfiltered information and distant messages can disturb the native social milieu and cause holes in the existing social fabric. An assumption that everything in the tribal world needs a remedy is false. We all know (but we prefer to ignore) that some of the tribal values especially with regard to status of women, divorce, widow re-marriage and female infanticide are boons which no process of development or social change should ever erode. It is here that communication should be looked at 'scientifically'. The mass expansion of a public communication network has to be other than political. Populations to whom the media is being introduced ought to be pre-tested for their preparedness to accept this extraneous agent of change. An indepth study of the prevailing social practices in the region ought to be made. Instead of broadcasting programmes on the national network, regional centres should create programmes, with which the native populations can easily identify themselves. A tribal of Mandla district is not aware of *dahej pratha* (dowry), it is bride price that he has to pay, he does not understand why brides should be burnt, for him amniocentesis has no meaning and he does not understand why daughters should be murdered or regarded as a curse. But before he falls prey to the predominant values of the controller group's social milieu it becomes essential that communication methodology is sensitive and culture oriented. Peripheral villages bordering Mandla township present a characteristic example of this unfiltered



DANCING FOR THEMSELVES: MOHAN KHOKAR

A majority of the peripheral villages have also been subjected to the growing pressures of Hinduisation and Sanskritisation with increasing and persistent interaction with migrant populations.

communication. Our observations suggest that the cases of female desertion are on the increase, unwed mothers are conscious of being different. Tribals now talk in whispers about separation, divorce, a *ghar bethana* or *churi pehnana* — customs which were

It is amazing how we are unable to provide iodised salt which costs less than one rupee per packet to hundreds of villagers in the 'goitre belt' and convince them to use it but are busy providing them 'urban tamashas' through the mass-communication media so as to distance them from their native surroundings and immediate reality.

normal to them. Women had the option to have a man with or without her children as she desired and could opt to live with another man without causing any social concern. Children were brought up as progeny of the tribe and their legitimacy or biological parentage was of little consequence. Today, under urban influence and unplanned, unfiltered communication these values are undergoing rapid change.

A majority of the peripheral villages have also been subjected to the growing pressures of Hinduisation and Sanskritisation with increasing and persistent interaction with migrant populations. Tribal customs gave total freedom to Gond boys and girls to choose their mate. Gradually parents and other relatives are having more and more say in the final settlement of marriage plans and proposals. Considerations other than the partners involved in the nuptial alliance have started playing a very significant role.

Marriage ceremonies are now acquiring the dimensions of a *mela* (fair) and are invariably accompanied by Hinduised rituals and expenditure that very few tribals are really in a position to afford.

Our present communication strategies will certainly bring about a heterogenetic change but the moot question remains — do the tribals desire this? If not then what? For that we must go to them first, find out, report and then plan. 'District level planning' appears to be becoming an important bureaucratic cliché. But nobody seems to know what they are really supposed to be doing with this model of planning. On the other hand we go on inaugurating TV transmission channels in every nook and corner of the country. But it is amazing how we are

unable to provide iodised salt which costs less than one rupee per packet to hundreds of villagers in the 'goitre belt' and convince them to use it but are busy providing them 'urban tamashas' through the mass-communication media so as to distance them from their native surroundings and immediate reality. Earl Warren summed it up beautifully when he wrote, 'the fantastic advances in the field of electronic communication constitute a greater danger to the privacy of the individual' and to this I must add 'causes greater stress to both individual and community.'

Media communication's stress on individual and community has made ethnic identification as the primary category of identification. Tribals living in remote villages, away from the channels of mass communication lived with an uncomplicated world view in which their identity as a Baiga or Gond mattered the most, though substratums existed. Sub-identificational categories never challenged the basic ethnic identity of the individual. Tribals were never under pressure to establish extra-territorial or extra-community loyalties. There was no conflict in their ethnic, regional or national identities. Their horizons were limited and their perceptions uncomplicated. Today, the tribal, either consciously or unconsciously, is being subjected to the pressures of multiple identities. He knows he is a Gond or a Baiga or Kol but in addition to this he is an Indian and if the pressures of dominating cultures are aggressive then he must also acquire a religious symbol. His simple animistic form of religion is looked down upon by the religious pressure groups and is not even recognised by the State or State machinery for development. What he watches on media are stories relating to the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* or festivities celebrating Ganesh *pooja*, Maha Kumbh, Id-ul-Fitr or Christmas. His Bara-Deo or his clan Gods have no place on the national network. In addition to this there are political and economic forces constantly at work. Somewhere and somehow on the road to development and modernity tribal sovereignty, sensitivity, identity and

pride was sacrificed, and blown away. Tribal rights become constitutional safe-guards which could be amended any time and need not be followed any time. As B.D Sharma wrote, 'tribals as a community and clan got alienated completely from the territory which they commanded for ages.' Their

If the picture is as bleak as projected above, then what should be done? Should we ban mass communication media? Should the literacy drive be abandoned? Do we stop giving the benefits of modern technology to tribals? Are we going to deliberately allow them to languish in poverty and sickness? To all this there can be only one vehement answer which is No, certainly not. As T.N Madan wrote in Culture and Development, 'the issue therefore is not to stop scientific progress, but to evolve lifestyles that put a limitation on wants and innovations'. In the same vein Madan argues that it is important to create circumstances and a congenial environment for the positive values of cultural pluralism.



economic loss was accompanied by social deprivation, causing a lot of resentment and heart burn. Invariably tribals were left perplexed, and bewildered. Not knowing what to do they allowed themselves to be subjected to a state of utter poverty which got further complicated by ambiguities surrounding an individual and his identificational categories. Initially

those ambiguities are expressed as confused emotions but within a short span they became rumblings with aggressive tones finally culminating in a militant mood and separatist tendencies. What happened in Nagaland, Mizoram, Darjeeling and Santhal Parganas provide an adequate background to social planners to analyse the consequences of communication, stress and unorganised planning. The tribals of Central India are still dormant, but one can sense a simmering discontent. Literacy, awareness and little more economic strength will play a significant role in determining tribal attitudes. Their individual and community experiences will establish their ethnic linkages and determine the nature of ethnicity; ethnicity must always be evaluated in terms of being both negative and positive. A negative perception of ethnicity is invariably interpreted by co-actors who attribute to it a sense of alienation. Positive ethnicity is a feeling akin to an '*esprit-de-corps*' by which an individual establishes his or her co-community linkages. Ethnicity is often challenged by nationalism, regionalism, linguicism or religious communalism. Each of these socio-political concepts are in fact variations of forms of ethnicity. As long as these various forms of ethnicity are not in confrontation with each other there is no danger of conflict or aggression. But once they are evoked as different conceptual constructs and an individual is expected to owe allegiance to one and express total loyalty and commitment to it, particularly when this pressure comes from exogenous sources, the threat to individual and community becomes serious.

If the picture is as bleak as projected above, then what should be done? Should we ban mass communication media? Should the literacy drive be abandoned? Do we stop giving the benefits of modern technology to tribals? Are we going to deliberately allow them to languish in poverty and sickness? To all this there can be only one vehement answer which is No, certainly not. As T.N Madan wrote in *Culture and Development*, 'the issue therefore is not to stop scientific

progress, but to evolve lifestyles that put a limitation on wants and innovations'. In the same vein Madan argues that it is important to create circumstances and a congenial environment for the positive values of cultural pluralism.

Therefore the first step in this direction is to create a 'structure of needs' that can be met by the given 'socio-ecological' environment. Programmes of heavy industrialisation, dams and alternative structures as well as modes of production, if not supported by ecology and the prevailing infrastructure at the community level, are destined to be failures in the remote tribal belts of the country. We have enough evidence to suggest that in the past such programmes have only promoted rural poverty, caused a cultural shock and led to an identity crisis.

The second step in this direction should aim at reducing communication stress. Wherever new T. V. transmission channels like relay centres are opened keeping the distant tribal populations in mind, precautions should be taken to provide a special package of programmes for these regions. As Dr. Everett suggests, 'in cross cultural communication the message must be given proper form and style so that the receiver gets the message which the sender intends'.

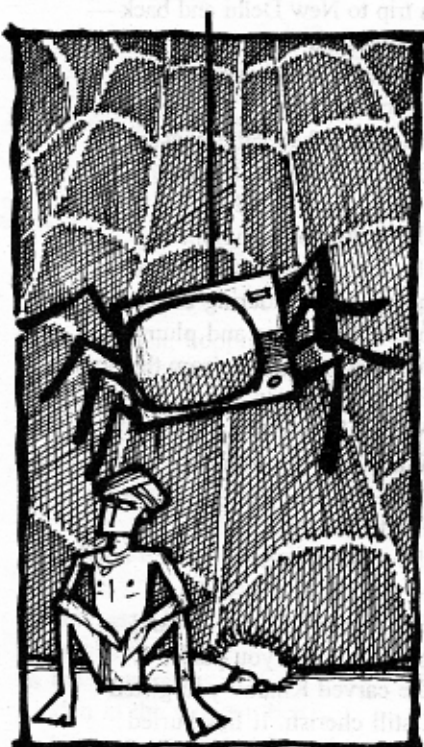
A third caution that we must observe in this area is to avoid a maddening rush for expanding mass communication media. The functional value of folklore and traditional channels of communication should be encouraged and organised in a pragmatic manner. Inter-personal

communication devices are a more reliable means of delivering messages. Print and the electronic media should be used, only for providing a broader context.

What we need for developing tribal belts of our country is a concept of sector planning. A tribal sector should be marked first and then schemes envisaged for its growth and development. A pilot survey of this sector ought to be carried out before any development programmes are launched. The development project at the outset is to be experimented only in one 'growth pocket' initially, and depending on its success a project should be launched in the entire sector. This would also provide scope for any modifications and where necessary, even rejection, thus, avoiding unnecessary expenditure and more important 'social distress' to the people upon whom the project is to be administered.

To conclude, we need to debate on the relevance of 'projects for development' and the question of what stands for development and for whom. We all seem to concur that something has to be done somewhere for somebody. We also agree that somewhere somebody wants something. But none of us seem to be able to co-relate 'quest' and 'desire' with what is 'our quest' and 'their desire.' Social scientists and anthropologists like me, think that we know cultural dimensions and the human factor, and that we are the only ones who can act as mediators, translators or brokers. Also that we are wiser than the bureaucrat or technocrat or the planner who stays thousands of kilometres away and has

never seen the people for whom he plans. Anthropological prejudice in this context may sound bohemian to many but the neglect of cultural insight in planning in the context of tribal development in India has already led to a colossal waste of funds and energies. Unless immediate steps are taken to incorporate the depth of information available with the grass root field worker, no planning whether district, state or national can achieve its desired objectives. ☞



RIPIN KALRA

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Poetry

NEERDA SURESH

'KHARAV'*

He had risked it from Kashmir —
a trip to New Delhi and back —
to meet his master
mistress and children.
I received him at the station.
The years had rollercoasted
through his frail frame.
His eyes still held
that little boy's look....
the tea in the samovar...
quietly embroidering under a chinar...
picking peaches and plums...
hauling in children from the orchard...
the daily namaz...
Master I miss you.
When will you return?
And the children?
Routed, rooted
they had scattered
to the US, to Australia.
But I hope to return, I said.
Master, when you parted
the carved Kharav you gifted
I still cherish. It lies buried
two feet underground
lest they accuse us of theft
when our houses get searched.
At times, I view them at night
in candle light.
Master, when will you return ?

* Wooden sandals.

BONSAIS

Bonsais are like birds
with clipped wings
mutilated miniatures
of natural trees.
With gnarled roots,
dwarfed, pygmied boughs
trapped in pots
in soul suffocation,
stunted, stifled,
they survive perhaps
dreaming of bursting
into swanking trees
swaying to the winds,
jostling for the sun
in a dense wood.



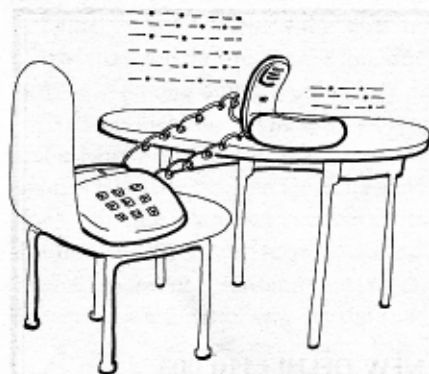
MY CREDENTIALS

No, not into slums
with literacy drives.
Or on the catwalk
with haute couture
or into vedanta discourses
on Wednesdays.
My credentials, unpretentious.
Only a rope walk
through programmed routines
broken by a stray
breezy trapeze through poetry.
A lame claim perhaps to upward
social mobility
in a blacklisted
Citibank Credit Card ?
My lay looks a safe bet
for strangers at dinners
to unburden their travails
of world travels,
jet lags, shopping lags,
cathartic confessions
of in-law traumas
without having to ask
you are Mrs. who ?
At ease, since they know
like passengers in transit
we might never, ever meet.
And that, I guess is my asset.

TALKING ON THE TELEPHONE

Talking on the telephone
I thought
was damn easy
like talking in the dark.
No visual distractions,
attractions
mere audio gymnastics
of pitch, tone intonation.
Till I got stumped
by a machine
an answering device
with a level intonation.
Removed twice

from reality
like a dream
within a dream,
a mask
within a mask.
To counter which
I think, you need
an asking machine.
The two could then
carry on
asking, answering
and
asking.





AGEING PAINS

When the man
in your growing son struggles out
shedding his snakeskin of childhood
something snaps inside
you ageing husband.
To confront your son as a man
means taking the back seat
not merely in allowing him
to decide what to wear
but what to do,
when to come and go too.

No room for two men
under one roof
with one woman
inclined more at times
towards the boyman.

PERSPECTIVE

I saw it
while sorting out
soiled clothes
to go into the machine.

I saw it
smudged and red
across the vest
as though someone had
snuggled, cuddled and...

across his chest.
An obstinate, obscene red.
My mother always sported
a big, black stick-on bindi.

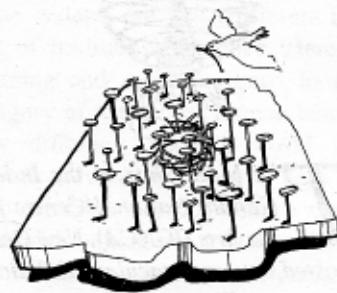
And this was my father's vest.

Now I saw him
in an altogether
new perspective.



ENCROACHMENT

One evening after work
groping in the mailbox
for messages, letters from nowhere,
my fingers encountered
sprigs, twigs and eggs.
A bird had nested
right inside my mailbox.
Annoyed, I cleared it all
except for the eggs.
Later in the evening
A squall had me out
hastily gathering, clothes left drying.



In the garden, hopping
in clumsy hurry, was a mynah
balancing in its yellow beak
twigs and slender sticks
heading for my mailbox
laboriously to rebuild
the cosy nest I had wrecked.
My vision blurred in the heady
showers,
the message I had missed
quite clearly I read
in the incongruous nest
hidden in the wooden box.
A trespass, an encroachment
that escaped persecution,
a slow persecution
through a denuding of its habitat
leaving no room to nest
except in wooden boxes
nailed to concrete walls.

Illustrations : Manoj Kothari

Neerada Suresh who teaches at a Kendriya Vidyalaya in New Delhi, has a post graduate degree in English from the University of Kerala.

She is actively associated with the Communicative Language Teaching programme of the British Council — C.B.S.E. Project. She is also involved with the National Literacy Movement and with gender related socio-economic development issues.

Her poetry has appeared in *Indian Literature*, *Femina* and other publications. The volume, *Voices for the future* that published the winning entries of the All-India Poetry Competition (1993) carried her poems. In that year she also won a Katha award for translation. In 1995 she was a participant in the 'Female Eye National Festival of Women Writers' in West Yorkshire, U.K.

These poems have been selected from *BONSAIS* her first collection, published by affiliated East-West-Press and distributed by Rupa.

IN CONVERSATION WITH MADHU KHANNA

RUKMINI SEKHAR



The Mati Ghar at the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), New Delhi has hosted some spectacular exhibitions in the past. These exhibitions have always attempted to lend visual credence and tangibility to the most abstract concepts. And you come away with the distinct feeling of having touched something new and deep. One brilliant winter morning we walked through Mati Ghar, the mud building with the dramatic shapes, dead ends, beckoning corners, mysterious outlets and dark steps... cool and dark, shadowy and lit, fluttering and still. You feel as if you have emerged from the deepest bowels of the earth and you squint when the sunlight hits you as you step out. The exhibition, *Rta-Ritu* was creatively designed and executed by the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad and conceived by Madhu Khanna, the lady with the indefatigable energy and the warm smile. Madhu is an Associate Professor at the Centre and is an expert on Tantra with several books to her credit. She is Founder Member of Spandan, a group dedicated to research on traditional architecture and is also the creator of the Tantra Foundation. She is forever 'thinking up' something innovative or 'writing up' for her next seminar. Using the exhibition as the basis, our conversation meandered through the hall, touching this and that exhibit and the concepts behind them. More inspiration and power to you, Madhu!

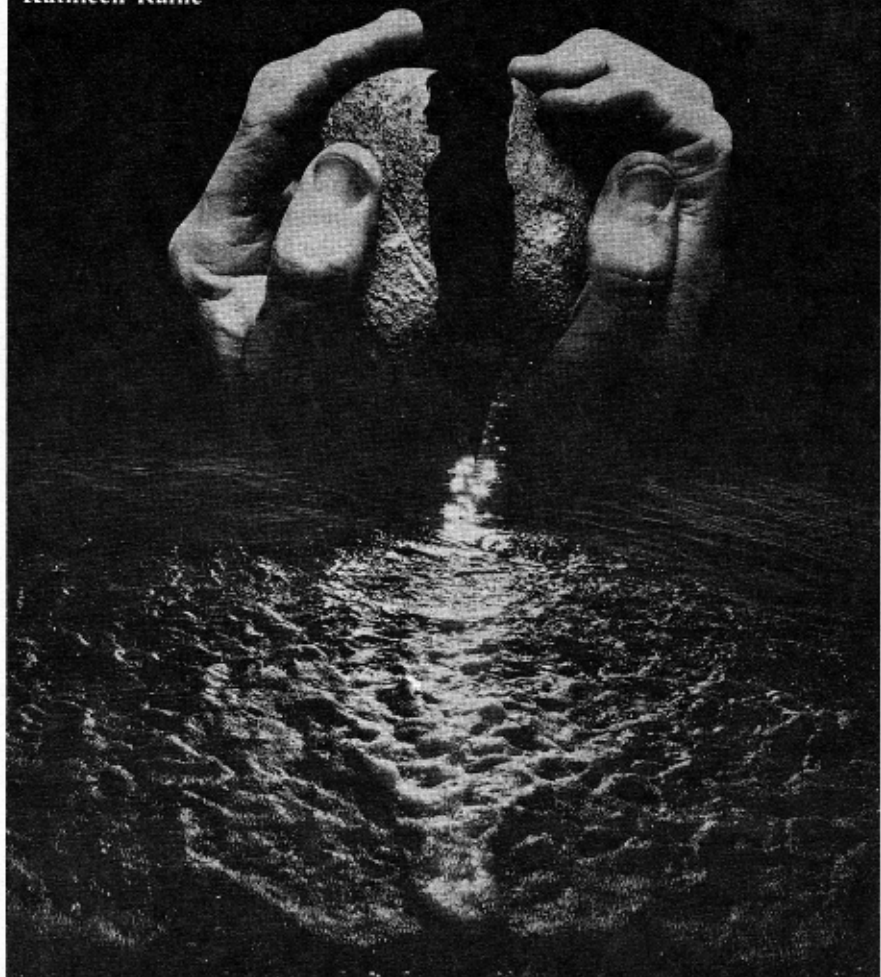
OUT OF NOTHING

*Within the centre of the rose
seed out of the silence grows.*

*Its crimson heart the night enfolds
the atom's void, the source of worlds.*

*From whose unfathomed chaos rise
star and leviathan from interior skies.*

Kathleen Raine



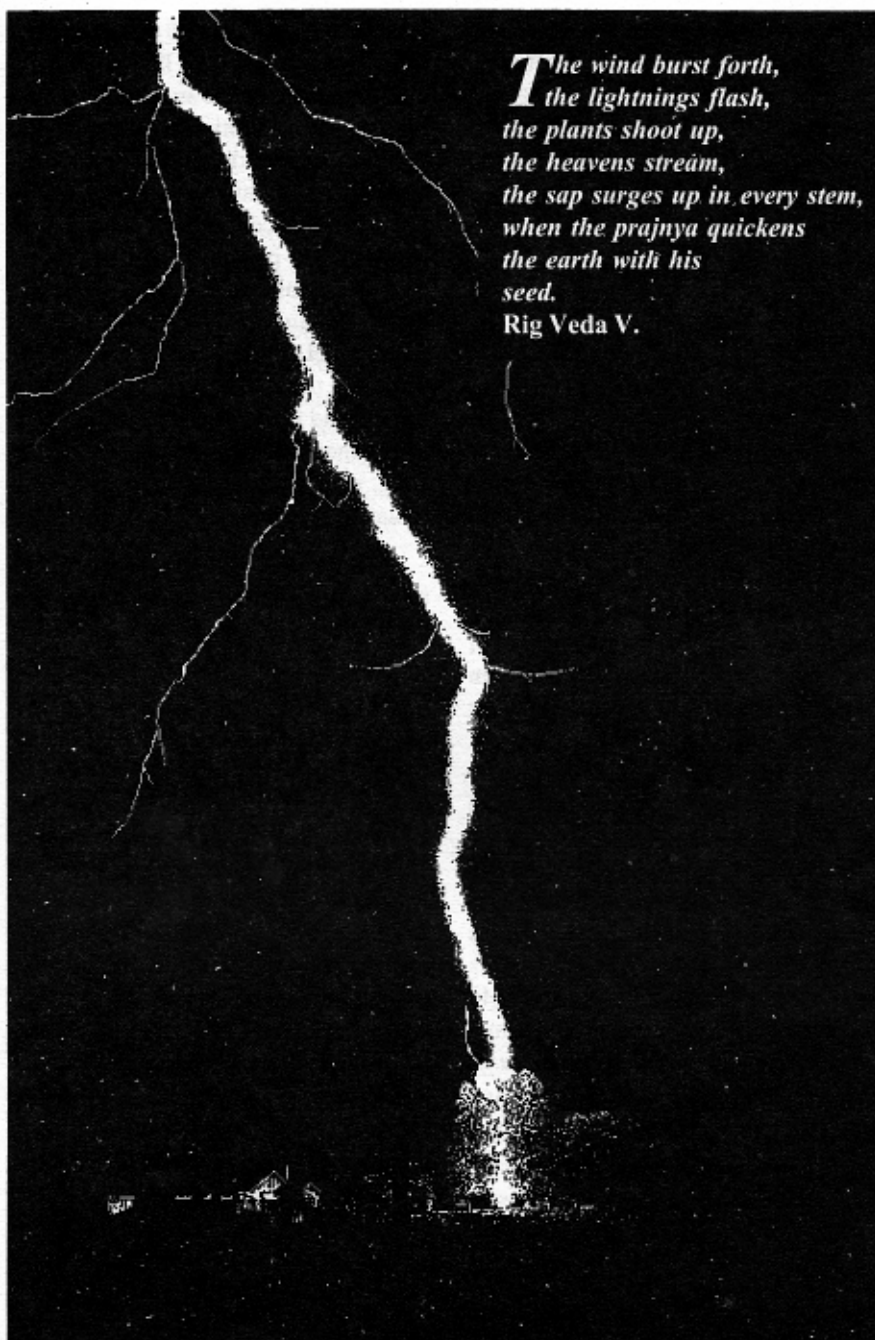
JERRY UELSMAN

Rukmini Sekhar: Recently, you invited me to your wonderful exhibition called *Rta-Ritu: Cosmic Order and the Cycle of Seasons*. A lot of hard work had gone into it. It was conceptually stimulating and executed very well. Congratulations to the IGNCA for doing something like this. I believe you have done exhibitions like this in the past on other themes. Can you link this particular one to those?

Madhu Khanna: This exhibition has history that goes back to over a decade. Firstly it is not an isolated exhibition; it is an exhibition done within a context which IGNCA believes to be its main philosophy — that guides

its programmes and research projects. The idea was first put together by Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan when this organisation started. She very much wanted to explore what she calls 'the perennial and universal categories' which are found in all traditional civilizations and which made these civilizations what they are. They were, at the same time archetypal ideas which were very relevant in defining the identity of these civilizations.

When we say traditional societies we are really talking of major civilizations linked closely to a particular religious world view such as Chinese, Islamic, Christian, the



*The wind burst forth,
the lightnings flash,
the plants shoot up,
the heavens stream,
the sap surges up in every stem,
when the prajnya quickens
the earth with his
seed.
Rig Veda V.*

'Hindu' world, Egyptian, the Greco-Roman world etc. When we began to explore the 'universal' ideas that governed them, we found that the notion and comprehension regarding space, time and the five elements, the relationship between the written word and the unspoken word, as well as notions that focus around the concept of order and harmony, were central to all civilizations of the world and descriptions of these in their cosmology and scriptural literature exist in almost all of them.

We started our first exhibition in 1986. It was centred on the theme of

Kham, Space. This was followed by another exhibition on the theme of Kala, Time. Then we had another exhibition on Akara or Calligraphy which explored the relationship of the written word and the unspoken word and then yet another one on Prakriti, The Five Elements. This year's theme is Cosmic Order and the Cycle of Seasons. All these themes are inter-related. These ideas have been expressed in their music, dance, painting and architecture. We thought that these subjects would make a very interesting subject for an exhibition.

R.S: From what you say, we understand for ourselves that these traditional civilisations, by their very nature, were harmonic. That's probably why we are looking back at them again and again and using them as yardsticks. Is it possible that we cannot refer to contemporary society as a civilisational yardstick because the order has disintegrated ?

M.K: Your question is very interesting and is based on two different world views. Today's world view and value systems are quite different from that of traditional societies. Here the meaning and value assigned to each category of nature and human being is very different. Today's world view cannot survive too long unless and until we take into cognizance certain perennials which are true for all time and for all cultures and all races and the reason for it is that it is the fundamental truth. We may dispense with life cycle rituals but the point is that every human being, whichever culture he belongs to, goes through different stages of growth. Nature is a backdrop to our lives; nobody can afford to dispute that and nobody can dispute the rhythms of nature because they belong to all cultures. So unless we reclaim the more holistic perception of traditional societies into our fragmented world view, we cannot really look upon ourselves as a civilisational yardstick. Ours is a society which has a very very long past, where thousands of ways of looking at the cosmos have been developed over the centuries. Suddenly India gets its independence and we are willing to dispense with all that; in effect we are willing to dispense with the *psyche* of the nation. So it is about time that all cultures with an ancient history took it upon themselves to reflect on their past and see it in terms of nourishing and nurturing their future.

R.S: The concepts that you are talking about are not in the ambit of most people who are living a day-to-day office-oriented kind of life. Most people do not even have the time to ponder on these things.

M.K: Today our lives are structured on the basis of the clock. What we are



trying to show in our exhibitions (on *Time* and on *Rta-Ritu*) is that there is another way of looking at time based on the cosmic order and cycle of seasons. That's why we need exhibitions like these to take us back. In a society there are always opinion makers and I think it is important for them to come and see this. It is very important, for instance, for anybody who is shaping India's economic policy, or an officer in the Ministry of Human Resources to come and see this so that they incorporate some of these ideas into their files. And, as you know, the U.N. itself is giving a lot of importance to the *cultural* aspects of ecology now, which they never did earlier, and also to the *cultural* aspects of development. And fortunately, our institution is in a position to give the cultural viewpoint. Some years back if you had spoken about the cultural aspects of development to any U.N. expert they would just think we were cuckoo !

R.S: These efforts by your institution, can you call them as being a component of a 'cultural renaissance' within the country ?

M.K: We don't disagree with that vision, but it is a difficult vision. A renaissance is organic and let's say that we have felt the need to draw attention to the component of 'culture' to understand ourselves better.

R.S: Tell us about the *Rta-Ritu* concept.

M.K: The overarching theme is man's fragmentation and disconnection with Nature. There is so much disharmony and chaos and a great deal of anxiety in modern life. Our links with the natural world are breaking day by day although there are

'alternative' groups both in India and abroad who are continuously reminding us that's not the way it should be. So, the backdrop to this exhibition is the breakdown of the social and cultural fabric. Cosmic order and cycle of seasons — that's *Rta* and *Ritu*.

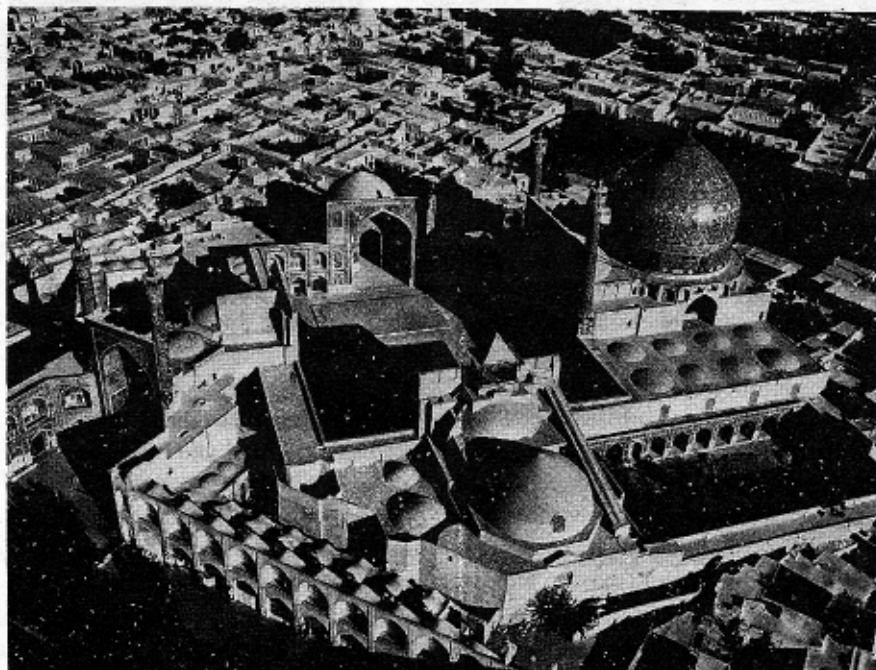
Rit is the word which is first spoken in the *Rigveda*. '*Rigveda*' means cosmic harmony, cosmic order, the self regulating principle of life.

Modern science believes there is no concept of absolute chaos even in nature. Order is inbuilt, and we perceive it on a day to day basis in the cycles of seasons and of day and night. We found that different cultures not only believe in the self-regulating principles in Nature but their vision of order permeates every aspect of life. In fact, societies plan their life in accordance with those basic rhythms. What is happening today is just the opposite; firstly we rarely notice the existence of the sun, moon and other cosmic bodies, or even the tree outside our garden. We are not in contact with nature and I think exhibitions such as this remind us to be in contact. This was one of the reasons why we thought we would choose the theme of *Rta* and *Ritu*. *Ritu* is, as you know, the index of *Rta*. *Rta* is the larger cosmic flow and that larger cosmic flow can be as vast as the galactic rhythms of *yugas* or the

rhythm can be as small as a heartbeat of a person or it can be linked with the monthly cycle of the moon. These are small rhythms within the larger cosmic rhythm. Many traditional societies were agricultural and livelihoods were planned in accordance with the seed cycle. Seeds played a very important part and similarly both the *chakras*, the *jeeva chakra* and the *beeja chakra* ran parallel to one another — the life cycle and the seed cycle. Each phase of growth and transition from one passage to another is celebrated by means of song, rituals etc. Celebrations made it easier for everyone.

R.S: Your exhibition had a whole section on architecture. What was the significance of that in the context of *rta-ritu* ?

M.K: We found that when we explored architecture, spatial order played a very important part in designing cities keeping the environment in mind. Traditional architecture is in total harmony with nature. The way the sites were selected were according to certain *lakshanas*—either certain horizon marks or mountains, trees, rivers etc. Cities were planned in the cradle of nature. We found that traditional architecture was the result of much painstaking research. There was a distinct effort to create both outward order in the



ISFAHAN - An Overview

planning of the city and also the psychical order. The city must provide for the inner needs of the psyche; so temples were placed in certain areas, keeping the notion of the 'sacred centre'. This is present in all cultures.

In India it is the *garbhagriha*. This word means the centre of the courtyard in a house where the *tulsi* plant is kept. We have a notion of the sacred centre out of which the whole building gets its lines and then finally it also links all other parts of the built mass to the centre. Islam followed very strict rules of orientation; all mosques had to face the *kaaba* which was considered to be the centre of the Earth.

Beijing was also shaped by cosmological ideas based on the philosophy of the square and the circle. The temples of Beijing as well as the forbidden city is based on the plan of the square and the circle. The king was the mediator between heaven and Earth. His place was in the centre of the city and was supposed to reflect the pole star on earth.

The cosmological architectural principles in Beijing are so strong that even the buildings surrounding the forbidden city were named after a star; it had to replicate a cosmological structure, a cosmos on earth. This is a phenomenon we find in several ancient cities like Isfahan, Madurai and Jerusalem. Their designs crystallise the ideal aspects of the architectural, artistic, astronomic, astrological, religious and political spheres of life.

Symmetry and harmony were important components.

R.S: So would you say that your exhibition focuses on man's search for the 'centre'?

M.K: No, its not a search for the centre. Rather, the better way to put it would be that the centre was already there. We want to show how man has always grasped this idea and tried to build and grow around it. When we go off-centre, 'an-rta,' disorder happens. There is a centre in Nature and a corresponding centre in man.



R.S: How does one discover that centre?

M.K: You discover it by being in constant contact.

R.S: I believe that the male-female complementarity is a vital ingredient in the maintenance of the natural order. That is how Nature intended it to be. Do you not see that there is gross disorder or 'an-rta' in the world today because this balance is tilted in favour of the male? Do you see this disorder having a sort of ripple effect?

M.K: Yes, it does, certainly. When the natural order is upset, chaos reigns.

One gender dominates and the results are jagged. You can see this jaggedness everywhere. To maintain complementarity, division of roles become important. Not in a narrow sense as it has been made out. What I mean is that women should be comfortable being women and should be respected for it. This should not be difficult for a progressive society to digest. Women should also have access to play other roles.

R.S: What are some of the other features of the exhibition?

M.K: What a famous anthropologist of Chicago University, Mircea Eliade, wrote once can be said to be the fundamental nodal point around which the entire exhibition revolves. I quote, 'The chief difference between the man of the archaic and traditional societies and the man in modern societies lies in the fact that the former feels himself indissolubly connected to the cosmos and cosmic rhythms, whereas the latter insists he is only connected to history'. Modern man has no reference point other than history. Because his concept of time span is only so much.

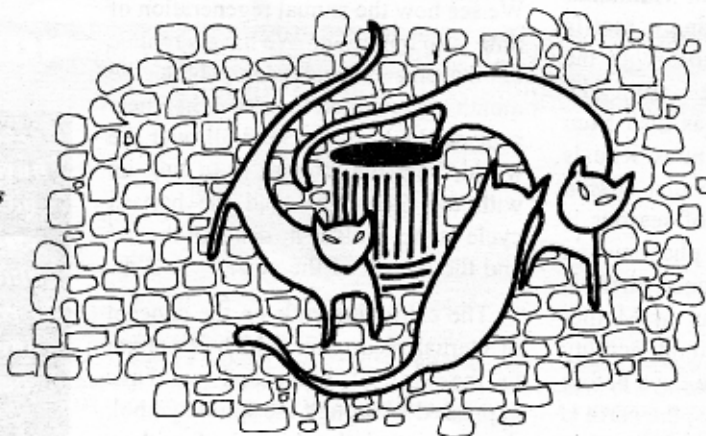
In one of the sections we took up the issue of 'moral order'. Truth is is not something which is religious, it is universal and perennial. You have the image of the inverted tree. The laws that govern the heavens also govern men and this is beautifully brought out in the Chinese *Book of Change* which we we have displayed. The picture illustrates a profound truth. Namely, that if man does not contradict heaven, then he does not violate his relationship with other men. It's not the other way round. It says "because he is in harmony with the sun, moon and heaven, therefore he does not violate other men".

The journey is not from the roots upwards; you start from the top and then come down. If your thought structure is polluted, then your lifestyle is polluted.

THE HOLLOW MEN

We are the hollow men
We are the stuffed men
Leaning together
Hearpiece filled with straw. Alas
Our dried voices, when
We whisper together
Are quiet and meaningless
As wind in dry grass
Or rat's feet over broken glass
In our dry cellar.

T.S. Eliot

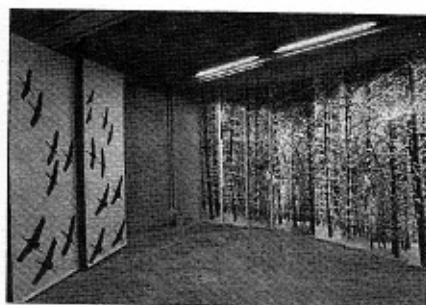


Rta and *satya* go hand in hand. *Satya* is the foundation of *Rta*. *Rta* is the structure and matrix of reality. *Satya*, its truth or substance characterises the content of reality. If there was no truth in the cosmos, no *dharma*, then there would be no *Rta*. Disorder would prevail like flying boulders going here and there. There is a lot in this universe that we can't explain and we have to come to terms with like age, sorrow, growth, deprivation, imperfections. It is the attitude towards it that brings about a transformation because situations and problems of life have always remained the same. The exhibition eggs you to explore these areas, not just look at objects. It is an exhibition on concepts. It needs a lot of introspection and reflection.

It is very important for us to pay attention to the fragmented man and arrive at an understanding of *an-rta* today. We portrayed T.S Elliot's poem *Hollow Men* and then Leonardo da Vinci's *Perfect Man*. This section has a flowering tree. The tree has two faces — half of the tree is withered and the other half is flowering. What we tried to do was to portray through the image, that the withered side faces the fragmented man because that's what he has done to nature and the other half that is flowering is in harmony with the *Perfect Man*.

R.S: One of the best sections was on the cycle of seasons, the *ritu chakra*. Could you explain some of the symbolism?

M.K: The *ritu chakra*, the cycle of seasons, corresponds to human cycles. We start with the summer section. We have a lovely panel with Gulmohar and other flowers, mango motifs showing creativity that goes with the season. We have quoted from the *Ritusamhara* of Kalidas as also from other texts from other cultures. Rituals associated with that particular season are shown. The coming of seasons is something more than a phenomenon given in nature. For instance, there is the ritual of menstruation of Mother Earth where all agricultural activity ceases for five days. Five days before the onset of the monsoons, the earth is all parched and then comes the first



showers and then agricultural activity starts.

The next section deals with the monsoon season, the sowing ritual and the transportation ritual. The peacock is an emblem of the monsoon in India and inspires so much poetry.

The next section focuses on autumn and the festivals of autumn which are many because the autumn marks the harvest season. We have Teej, Ganesh Chaturthi, Krishna Janmashtami etc. And then come the post harvest dancing and singing all over India.

Next we have the winter season, migration of birds and Makar Sankranti. Then the abundant earth during spring with poetry and picture, the *Gita Govinda*, paintings of India and China and temple decorations on the theme of spring. The next section deals with the annual new year festivals. We see how the annual regeneration of time is so important. We have a replica of the ancient calendar where the months are marked to show when new year celebrations are held all over the world, here the attempt is to link up with the time cycle and the harvest cycle of the world. The death of the old and the rebirth of the new.

The exhibition ends on the concept of eternal recurrence which is central to the idea of order and we have expressed it through the spiral symbol, the one symbol which is found in

nature and in the human body. The final statement of the exhibition is this beautiful quote from the *Atharvaveda*:

*Unified am I, quite undivided,
Unified my soul
Unified my sight, unified my hearing,
Unified my breathing—both in and out
Unified is my continuous breath
Unified, quite undivided am I,
the whole of me.*

Atharvaveda XIX,51.



Since the renaissance we have been constantly trying to go beyond our limits. Today, we are trying to determine those limits. We have in fact reached a point where we have to ask, what lies beyond these newly identified limits?

Erhard Eppler



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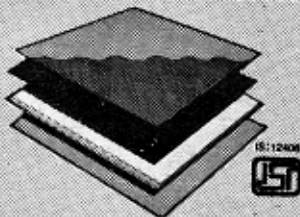


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GOD'S DANCE IN THE JEWELLED CITY
THE LAI HAROBA

SHYAMA HALDAR

THE LYE VOL. 3 NO. 4



There's a story about Shiva, the most totally *mast* or happy-go-lucky of all the gods. Being, among other things a top-rank dancer, he was wandering around one day looking for a place to perform. Not that there was any dearth of Mussoories and Shimlas - this was, after all, long before tourists and timber industries. You see, this man

Descriptions would be travesty, they would certainly fall short of its loveliness. Anyway Shiva freaked (and coming from him that's something)! With one stab of his trident he drained the waters and the lake was revealed, more splendid than Heaven itself. The God was pleased, he paged his wife, "Pack your bags and bring the band," and the dancing that followed lasted

the Gandharvas, the celestial musicians. Women here see themselves as disciples of Usha, the dawn goddess, who taught women the dance of Parvati.

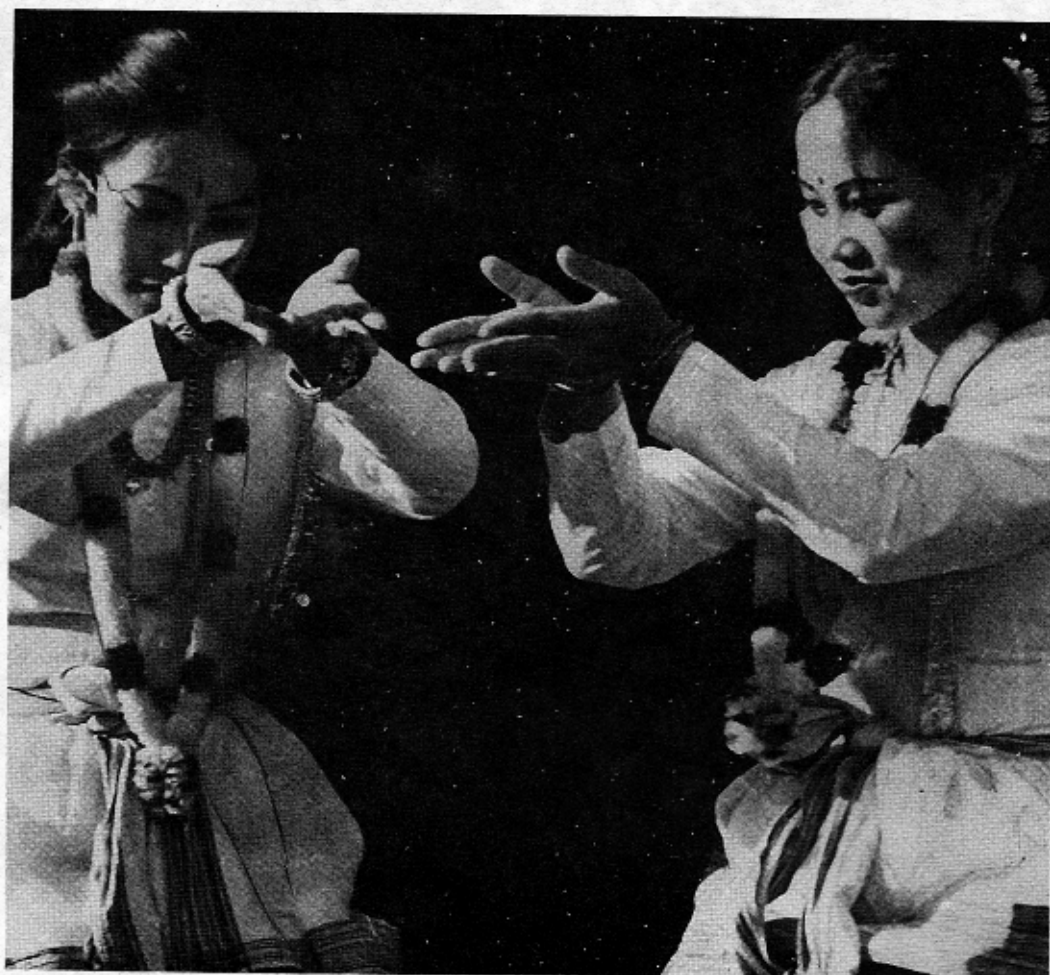
A broad grouping of Manipuri dance distinguishes two forms: the Lai Haroba and the Ras. The Ras is, to outsiders, perhaps the more familiar — mention Manipuri dance and the image comes to mind of the costuming

that is the Ras's most immediate feature — stiff skirts, veils, elaborate stylization. The Ras owes its pre-dominance to the Vaishnav culture and spiritual philosophy. Its themes have primarily to do with the Krishna *leela*, and while most of its movements derive from the Tantric based Lai Haroba, it has contrived to supercede the older dance as the 'classical' art form.

The Lai Haroba has survived, however, despite the excesses of kings like Pamheiba who banned and burned everything connected to the earlier Bratya (Tantric) religion, forbidding even the use of its language and song. It is preserved by the Meities who were originally followers of the Bratya religion, a Tantric cult with an admixture of the primitive concepts of cosmology

and a worship of Shiva and the Goddess. The Lai Haroba dance and ritual is at the heart and essence of their cultural heritage and all the Vaishnavites' fanatic energy could not annihilate it.

The Lai Haroba, pleasure of the gods, is also called the Leisemba Jagoi. *Jagoi* in Manipuri is equivalent with dance; *lei* means the earth and *semba* to form or create. Taken together the name thus translates as 'the dance of the creation of the world' recreated in the community to remind men, in vivid demonstration, of the Divine.



In the Lai Haroba, the role of the maibis involves a wide range of mystic dances, each with a specific designation and purpose.

was an artist and he needed that one special place - somewhere the dance he had in mind would need not only to fit perfectly with everything around it, but would even be made more beautiful by its setting. Anyone who's had anything to do with magic knows how important this 'one place' is. Read the teachings of Don Juan.

So Shiva was on the road and Ooty didn't send him and neither did Kashmir and he went further and further into out-of-the way places that are on nobody's must-see maps until... he came upon a lake, and what a lake!

seven days and seven nights. There was music by the Gandharvas and lights by the serpent god Nagadeva himself, reflected from the 'mani' or jewel he carries in his hood. Indeed, it was the jewel that gave the valley its name - Manipur, the city of gems. The myths show how very central dance is to the Manipuris, not only as a vehicle for the interpretation of collective experience, aspiration and belief, but, as the pivot on which turns their very self definition. The creation of Manipur is attributed to a dance; the people of Manipur are said to be descendents of

Performed every year during the month of *chaitra*, i.e. during April and May, the dances last several days and nights and the whole community joins in. It is a dance that is part ritual, part folk and part classical. Principal roles however are danced by priests and priestesses, known as Amaibas and Amaibis (*Maibas* and *Maibis*). The Amaibas who are the male dancers, dress and regard themselves as the female attendants of Shiva and Parvati. These dancers are selected for life, the chosen ones destined to adopt this vocation in the Loising, the special monastery attached to the palace. Their costume is distinctive — white, unadorned, apart from the colourful striped border of the overskirt. Ornaments are often as simple as a single flower behind one ear.

The first part of the dance invokes the deities by placing leaves in a nearby stream, symbolic of life emerging from the eternal waters. These are then brought back to the village and the Amaibis enact the *Laihunba*, or scattering of flowers, infusing life into the gods and goddesses. The role of the *Maibis* involves a wide range of mystic dances, each with a specific designation and purpose. A seat is then prepared in the centre of the stage; prayers are made to the deities that watch over the stage and the dancers; an Amaibi dances, moving anti-clockwise to the four corners of the performing area. The Meiteic word *jagoi* also means moving in a circle and it is claimed that the tradition of moving anti-clockwise in the dance is taken from the Rig Veda which states that dancers must move in accordance with the movements of the planets.

Several themes find their way into the dances of the Lai Haroba. One, called the Lai Pou is concerned with the incarnation of god, the building of a temple and the making of fine garments for him, astonishingly detailed miming takes place here. Others depict sports, hunting, fishing and other aspects of the functions of rural daily life, putting these into the context of sacred rite, the connection to divinity. Love duets are also enacted,



The touching story of Khamba and Thoibi is one of the favourite dances of Manipur and has been woven into the Lai Haroba presentation.

principally between Shiv and Parvati, though the ill fated tale of Thoibi and Khamba is the main theme of the Moirang school. Thoibi and Khamba were both from Moirang village just south of Imphal. Thoibi was a wealthy princess from a high caste, Khamba was of humble birth. Thoibi's family went to great lengths to separate the lovers but finally they were united. Their happiness, however, hard won as it was, was shortlived. Thoibi was accidentally responsible for her husband's death and, in grief, killed herself as well. The two are especially remembered for their dancing of the Lai Haroba — so exceptionally exquisite that they came to be regarded as incarnations of Parvati and Shiva.

The movements of the Lai Haroba alternate between *lasya* or the soft and flowing and *tandava* or the strong and virile. These are aspects encountered in all classical dance but nowhere are they as well defined as in Manipur. The men's dance is vigorous, characterised by leaps, while the women achieve a smooth, gliding effect, never stretching their limbs to the maximum limit. Numerous curves and bends execute a choreographical pattern, moving in intertwined circles where

beginning is end and end, beginning.

After many days of dancing, the Lai Haroba comes to a close. The village bids farewell to its deities by placing them in boats and sending them downstream for their journey into the unknown. A re-affirmation has been made, God and Man's symbiotic dependence on each other has been given tangible, real expression, and life is elevated, for a time, into something more than the drab and the ordinary. ❧

Photos: Mohan Khokar, Dancing For Themselves.

Shyama Haldar, is 22 and ready to go! She graduated in English Literature from St. Stephens College, Delhi University. Her main work has been in Theatre (said she), but we've seen her on the small screen as well. Writing takes the mickey out of her and her stuff still isn't what she thinks it should be (said she, modestly). She intends to make it a profession though. Good luck Shyama!

PROFILE

M.T. VASUDEVAN NAIR

RATHI MENON

M.T. Vasudevan Nair is one of our greatest living authors. He writes in Malayalam and has won the prestigious Jnanpith Award for 1996. We take great pleasure in felicitating him in this profile.

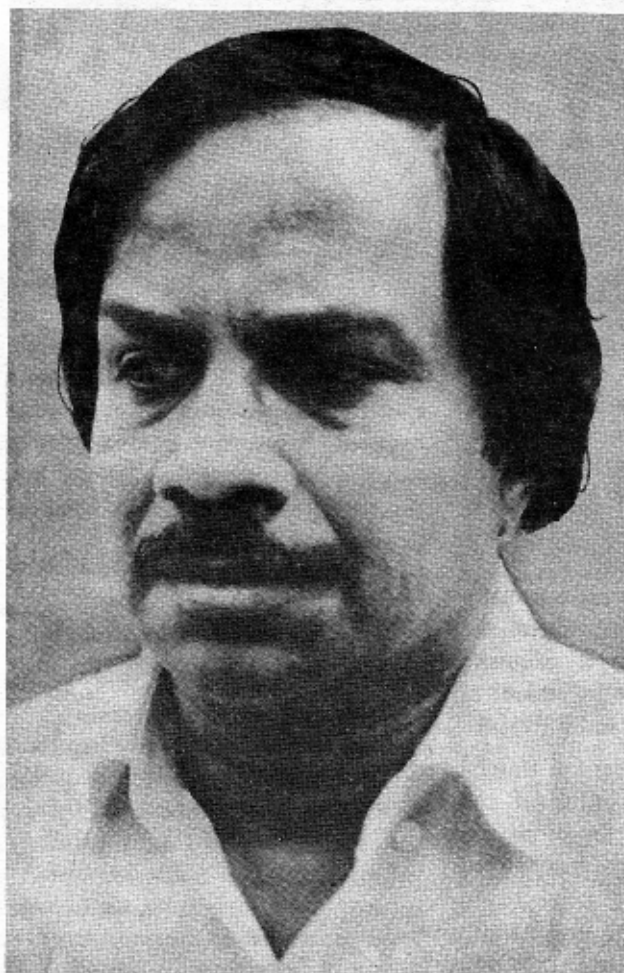


PHOTO: RATHI MENON

Narayana Panikkar and the renowned Jnanpith Award to M.T. Vasudevan Nair. The Jnanpith Award given to M.T. Vasudevan Nair was not really a surprise to Keralites who felt that this recognition should have come to him earlier. It is not an exaggeration to say that the Malayalam reading public is exuberantly sharing the joy of this award with him.

M.T. as he is endearingly called by his readers is, in a sense, a literary Midas. Almost everything that he has written has had the golden touch of excellence. His multifaceted personality and the uniqueness of his

those who might consider this a limitation, he clearly states in the preface to his selected short stories that he prefers to love the closeness of his familiar Nila River rather than the mystery of the ocean far away. His protagonists are always the common people of his village. His narratives describe their conflicting emotions edged with a deep human concern. Much of his work has an autobiographical flavour.

The charm of M.T.'s lyricism has always been hailed. A man of few words and as someone who knew the power of words, he established that literary attempts, especially narratives, can be internal without being subjective, reflective without being essayistic and musical without abandoning the narrative framework.

M.T. got noticed for the first time when he bagged the first prize for his short story, *Valarthu Mrigangal* in an international short story competition jointly held by the *New York Herald*, *The Hindustan Times* and *Mathrubhoomi*. This was in his student days in 1953. A prolific writer, M.T. has to his credit, eighteen short story collections, eight novels, one play, two travelogues, two essay collections and a study on Hemmingway. Not mentioned so far are several film scripts which he wrote. A few among his famous short stories are,

The past one year has been a very rewarding year for Malayalam literature — Saraswati Samman Award to Balamani Amma, Kalidasa Puraskar to Kavalam

story telling are sure to survive beyond generations.

M.T.'s literary world revolves mainly around his native village, Koodalloor and the towns nearby. To

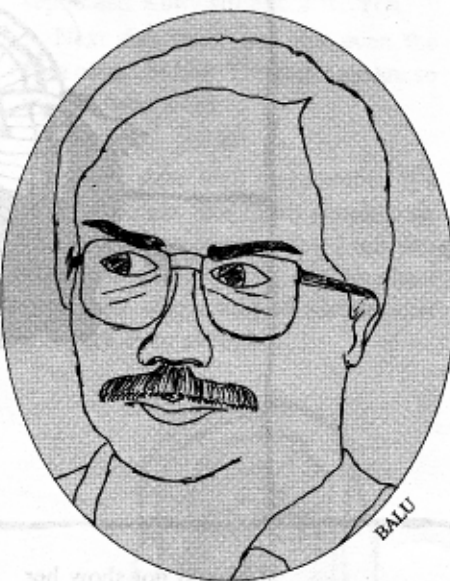
Kuttiedathy, Oppol, Iruttinte Atmavu, Ninte Ormakku, Olavum Tiravum, Patanam, Vedanayude Tazhvarakal, Vanaprastham and Sherlock. To name some of his novels, they include, *Patiravum Pakalvelichavum* (Midnight and Daylight), *Nalukettu* (The Mansion), *Asuravithu* (The Dragon Seed), *Kalam* (Time), *Manju* (Mist), *Vilapayatra* (The Mourning Procession) and *Randamoozhan* (The Second Turn).

In 1956 he got the Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award for his novel, *Nalukettu*. His short story collection and his play *Gopura Nadayil* have also won the Kerala Sahitya Akademi awards. He is thus perhaps the only writer to have been honoured by the Akademi for three different literary genres. His novel, *Kalam* won the Central Sahitya Akademi award in 1970 and his *Randamoozhan* won the prestigious Vayalar Award in 1985.

M.T took to writing when the tempo of progressive writing in Kerala was a bit weak. However, the works of Uroob and S.K Pottekat started influencing the literary scene, particularly in the genre of the novel. Naturalism and idealism began to blend. M.T who comes after these two stalwarts imbibed these qualities along with a romantic inclination. So we find that his novels are realistic as well as poetic.

Born into the Nair community of Malabar, whose economic bases are deeply rooted in feudalism which suffered massive setbacks due to social change, M.T's childhood is full of unpleasant memories and bitter feelings. The system was too rigid and

the people too conservative, clinging desperately to past 'glories'. Their obstinacy prevailed over all they



thought and did, even as they tried to perpetuate the old order. Their personalities grew warped and strange. Writers and others interested in social reform began to get restless. M.T depicts this tumultuous and complex period in a powerful manner and delineates the dilemmas of a sensitive mind thrust into this scenario. Helpless people always attracted his compassion. He is at his best when he talks about the rebels of the period and the scions of decaying Nair families. One finds these themes repeated in *Nalukettu*, *Asuravithu* and *Kalam*.

His novel *Manju* (Mist) marks a breakthrough in the Malayalam novel. This novel with a poetic tonality disperses the conventional notion about the structure of a novel which is

supposed to have a definite plot and conclusion. It is the story of Vimala of lonely heart, set against the background of Nainital. The landscape of Nainital with its hills and lakes, clears and fades with the drifting mist just like the memories of Vimala. The flashback and stream of consciousness techniques are used with utmost care, revealing Vimala's disappointments and ecstasies. *Randamoozhan* is a novel with an epic dimension. Here, the story of the *Mahabharata* has been retold with Bhima, the second Pandava as the protagonist. The story of Bhima unfolds into the story of any human being who has a sensitive heart and has been unrecognised for his talents. This novel transcends time and locale.

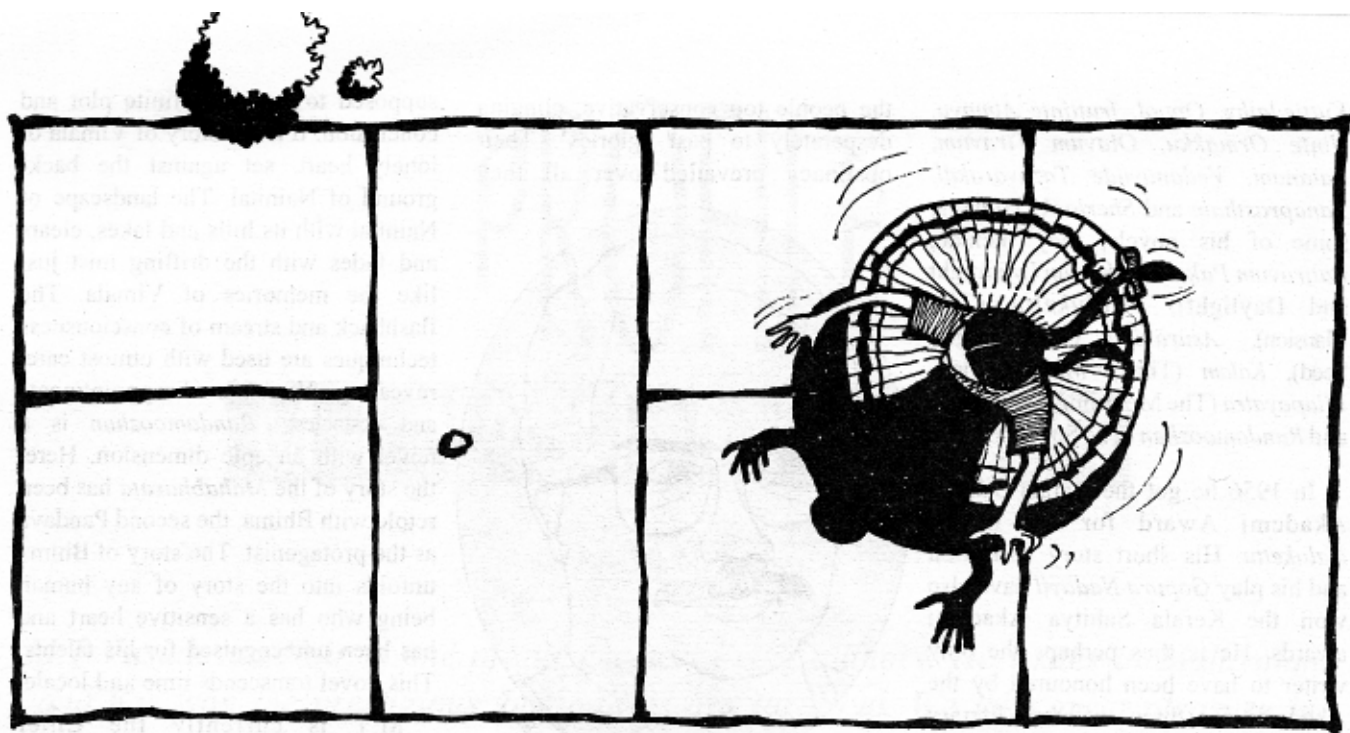
M.T is currently the Chief Editor of *Mathrubhoomi Publications* in Kozhikode. He is a well known script writer and his film *Nirmalyam* got a gold medal. The *Jnanpith Award* is certainly a colourful feather to his crowning glory. This 'angry balladeer' of Malabar has certainly widened the horizons of Malayalam literature. ❧

Rathi Menon is a lecturer at St. Xavier's College, Aluva in Kerala. She is at present working as a Post Doctoral Fellow in the Department of Modern Indian Languages and Literature, Delhi University. She is a writer of excellence and is keenly concerned with feminist issues. Her work has been featured in *Mathrubhoomi* and *India Today*.

LITTLE EARTHQUAKES

M T VASUDEVAN NAIR

The following pages contain an excerpt from a delightful short story by our writer. Unfortunately the story is not short enough to be printed in entirety. Space constraints, you see. How we wish we could print every single line of it! But given below is a good sample of M.T's writing. You can almost smell the smoke at the wedding, see the strange trio playing *kothengallu* in the large Kerala household, hear the rustle of Janakikutty's silk skirt and feel Mutthashi's dead skin. It is a story that weaves and flits through the young girl's supernatural domain and the ending is.... well.... amazing! We have tried to choose sections that provide for a continuity in the storyline taking it to its end.



One day, at ucchakkaanam¹, I was taking a stroll in the parambu². And ... there was someone under the mango tree. At once I knew that this was the yakshi³ they'd been talking about.

I wanted to run but my feet wouldn't move. I wanted to scream but no sound would come out of me. I closed my eyes tight and chanted 'Arjunan, Phalgunan, Arjunanphalgu...'

I heard a soft voice.

'Janakikutty.'

It had a strange fondness in it. I liked the way she called me by my full name. Others call me Jatti. I opened my eyes slowly. Kunjathaal was standing next to me.

You've seen that Athemmar girl haven't you, she who was married off to that Kunnamkulam boy? Well, Kunjathaal looked exactly like that.

A white mundu⁴ with the traditional kara and kuri; a white blouse; a white cloth around her shoulder. She had a red spot of chaandu on her forehead. Studs in her ears. A necklace of sovereigns around the neck.

'Why has Janakikutty come alone?' she asked.

I kept quiet.

'Why doesn't Janakikutty's Mutthashi come nowadays?'

I couldn't take my eyes off her mouth as she talked. I told myself that



I should not show her that I'm frightened. So I asked her as if I was not at all scared, "Where is your damsht⁵ra?"

Karineeli drew a game board on the ground. She brought broken tiles. And the three of us sat there and played vattu.

The Athemmarkutty burst into laughter. Ah, what pretty teeth! She said, 'The damsht⁵ra grows big only when we have a prey. But it scares everyone away. That's why we have no one to play with.'

In the rear slopes of the parambu there is a dilapidated outhouse. A servant used to stay there. Around it is a thicket of palm trees. Yakshi went and sat there, took out betel leaves and nuts from the folds of her mundu, tucked them between her molars and started chewing.

I looked longingly at her. Yakshi glanced at me as she said, 'small children shouldn't chew betel.'

I collected seven small smooth pebbles. We sat there and played my favourite game, kothengkallu. You should see Yakshi playing! How easily she scooped up four, five stones at each throw. Naturally, it was Kunjathaal

who won. That is what Yakshi likes me to call her.

'Tomorrow, Janakikutty, you win.'

She smiled. What if I lose? At least I have someone to play with.

Yakshis are so true to their word. If my edathi⁶ says, 'I'll give it to you tomorrow,' it means she's putting me off. She won't give it to me. But yakshis are not like that. And the next day, it was I who won.

Every day at dusk, Mutthashi teaches me to say my prayers. This has started recently, after she heard my mother say, "At least this much good can come from this good-for-nothing hag."

I have not seen my real Mutthashi, that is, Amma's and Valiamma's mother. She died years ago. This Akkara Mutthashi is my real Mutthashi's younger sister. Amma and Valiamma, when talking about this Mutthashi, always say, "It is due to this hag's character that her children didn't look after her. Etta!" Etta is their own language of abuse. And when this Mutthashi was laid up in bed Amma moaned: "What problems! Now I have to wait on this wretched old hag."

That evening I told Mutthashi about Yakshi and how I played kothengkallu with her.

"Shhh...Don't tell this to anyone," Mutthashi warned. "I know these yakshis. None of them will harm you, kutty," she whispered in my ears.

When we got bored with kothengkallu, Yakshi and I would roam all over the parambu. It was then that I saw Karineeli. You know that parapoodam that comes dancing in the Velakali temple festival. And you must have seen Kali who comes to sweep our courtyard and collect the coddung. Kali looks just like the parapoodam and this Karineeli is a younger version of our Kali. Karineeli wears no blouse; only necklaces made of stones and beads. Her teeth are black. That may be because she chews betel.

Karineeli was standing beneath the kanjira tree. I didn't know who she was. Kunjathaal was angry. She muttered, "Hmm...! That Karineeli!"

Yakshi and Karineeli stood glaring at each other. I have seen Amma and Valiamma staring at each other like that. This was much more frightening. I feared war. But nothing happened.

"Why does thampuratti not let me join her game?" Neeli asked.

My friend Kunjathaal grimaced, then nodded her head. "Okay. Come."

Karineeli drew a game board on the ground. She brought broken tiles. And the three of us sat there and played vattu.

When I told all this to Mutthashi that evening she patted me and said, 'Nothing wrong with you, kutty. No evil will befall you.'

One day when we were walking through the compound Kunjathaal showed me the brahmarakshas. It was standing on that dilapidated platform on which we had played kothengkallu. You've seen Kunju Namboodiri who died, haven't you? Imagine Kunju Namboodiri grown three times as tall. The brahmarakshas was exactly like that.

"If we don't go near it, not even for a friendly chat, it won't do us any harm," Kunjathaal said.

As a matter of fact it did not even look at us. Unlike those other friends of Neeli — Parakutty, Karikutty and Kallaadimutthan who always hid in the thicket and peeped at us. Sometimes they dared to inch towards us but one stare from Kunjathaal would make them scurry back into their holes!

One day, a poisonous thorn pierced

my foot. The wound was deep. Neeli got angry and started abusing Kallaadimutthan. "If the wound turns septic and Kutty suffers...I'll...You..."

Next day there was not even the pain of an ant bite. These people are so true to their word.

✽

I don't sleep well these nights. It's not a sickness like these people say. The reason is a secret. Shall I tell you why? It is jealousy. Envy of Kunjathaal and Neeli who could wander around and play even at night.



A white mundu with the traditional kara and kuri; a white blouse; a white cloth around her shoulder. She had a red spot of chaandu on her forehead. Studs in her ears. A necklace of sovereigns around the neck.

Once I saw them walking through the plantain grove munching something. I went to the window and called out softly. "Kunjathaal ... Neeli!" But they didn't hear me at all. What friends!

It was then that my mother woke up and what an earthquake there was! She lit the lamps. Everyone came running. Mutthashi also came, dragging her frail frame, grabbing the walls for support. Amma shrieked. "We have enough troubles, you old hag! Don't add to them. If you should fall down, collapse..."

✽

It was now decided that they would bring in a renowned sorcerer from Kallaadikottu or some such place. Thekkukaran Ravunni Nair went to meet this mantravadi⁸ and came back, having fixed an auspicious date for his visit. I overheard all that he said about that mantravadi.

Immediately I called Kunjathaal. She ought to know what they are going to do, no? A dagger would be made red hot on burning coals; nails would be driven into a log of the kanjira tree. The fire and the heat, the scalding and the piercing would drive the evil spirits away, not merely from the humans but from the village itself.

Kunjathaal heard me out and pooh-poohed this with a giggle. So I told Mutthashi. Mutthashi also just laughed.

The mantravadi came from Kallaadikottu and started the elaborate ritual. A lot of lamps were lit and a round, sacred kolam was drawn on the floor.

In the beginning I was a little scared. When Kunjathaal and Neeli came and stood behind me, I felt better. Then Mutthashi came, dragging her aged frame. She sat down beside me and all my fear vanished.

The man drove nails into the kanjira wood.

I turned around and looked furtively at Kunjathaal. Kunjathaal was in a rage. But Neeli winked at her and grinned.

Then the wood was set on fire.

Oh, what heat! How much smoke! I fell backwards. Kunjathaal held me and I promptly fell fast asleep.

"The evil spirits have all left. Disappeared! Now there will be no trouble whatsoever." When the mantravadi said this, I was resting my head on Kunjathaal's lap.

I laughed.

Kunjathaal whispered in my ears, "Sleep Janakikutty, sleep." She smelt of sandal paste and new clothes.

Next day Valiachhan, that is Sarojini Edathi's father came. Mine didn't.

Mutthashi sighed. "Mmm. Just two months leave. Within that time he has to get Sarojinikutty married. Luckily, the bridegroom has been found."

It was someone called Sankaranarayanan. He worked with Valiachhan.

Kunjathaal and Neeli crept quietly into the house that evening. Everyone believed that the mantravadi's ritual had banished them from the village.

"Will I be fortunate enough to see Janakikutty's marriage?" Mutthashi asked Kunjathaal. Kunjathaal seemed lost in thought.

¶

Guests started pouring in. They were received. Jewellery was displayed, sarees and brocades too. Tall tales were exchanged.

Who had the time to see if Mutthashi or I had eaten?

I was mad with rage. That night, when Kunjathaal was on her usual beat, she looked in through the wooden grille in the southern wing of the house. "Where is your damshtra?" I asked her. "You'd better suck the blood of all these wretched people."

"Really? You really want that?"

"Don't kill," I said. "Just frighten them."

She looked as if she was seriously considering my request as she shook out her hair, turned into a yakshi and looked at those who were sleeping. Then she laughed. They were all strangers. Folks who'd come three full days ahead of the marriage.

That night, a sound woke me up. People were running all over the place. A real earthquake!

"Quick! Bring that pill of hers that will make her breathe more easily!" someone was ordering.

"May nothing happen before the marriage." This was Valiamma's prayer.

Mutthashi's condition was critical again.

Karineeli wears no blouse; only necklaces made of stones and beads. Her teeth are black. That may be because she chews betel.



I got up and rushed to Mutthashi's room. When I reached there, Amma saw me. "Get out! Go back to bed. Who asked you to come here?" she screamed.

Next day, the pandal was up in the courtyard. Alongside the kitchen a long, narrow shed had been erected for the cooks. Huge vessels and ladles were brought from the temple storeroom. Valiamma brought my new skirt and blouse back from the tailor. Not a colour that I liked. But the material was good Silk.

"We have got all this for you. Do you know why? So that you'll be a good girl and behave. Don't make people say things about you. Understand?" Valiamma stroked my hair.

From now on, I'll not utter a word - that's for sure.

But I kept wondering what new games Kunjathaal and Neeli were playing without me. They were not to be seen around here. But then, looking at all the hustle and bustle, who'd want to come here?

Mutthashi's room reeks of urine. When Mutthashi breathes there is an awful sound. When she sees me she beckons me with her head and I go stand near her. Valiachhan and Ravunni Nair keep peeping in.

When the decoration of the pandal was over, two loudspeakers were mounted and they started playing recorded music. One loudspeaker was turned towards the fields. Another towards the hill. Let my Yakshi too hear the music.

¶

The rustle of my new silk skirt was like music. Near the outhouse, Kunjathaal was sitting combing her hair. She was alone. "Do you know what Sarojini Edathi did?" I burst out. "She went to the temple without doing namaskaram to Mutthashi."

Kunjathaal laughed.

"You call yourself a great yakshi. What is the use? Can't you help Mutthashi? She wants to see the wedding."

Kunjathaal looked at me.

"Um. I'll come to the wedding too. You bring Mutthashi. Neeli and I will wait at the gate."

I wasn't sure if she was joking. I hesitated. Kunjathaal said, "I am serious. I am sure Mutthashi will come. You call her."

I ran back to the house. When I was entering Mutthashi's room, Ravunni Nair asked "Why is kutty here?"

"Mutthashi..."

"You can't go in. shouldn't you be at the temple?"

"Mutthashi should come too."

"Mutthashi is dead, kutty. We are not telling anybody until the feast is over. Kutty should also not tomtom it. Don't go in. You'll get scared..."

I turned a deaf ear to him. I leaned on the door. It opened slightly. He looked at me in anger. "Go in, go in... what does it matter to me?" he said.

I went in.

Mutthashi was still. She had covered herself up to her neck. She must be angry and so pretending to be dead. Sometimes when she has had a quarrel with Amma or Valiamma she'd lie

thus, without even touching her food. Mutthashi always had such tricks up her sleeve.

Mutthashi shouldn't die without seeing the marriage. I won't allow it.

"Isn't Mutthashi coming? It is I..."

Standing at the door, Ravunni Nair gave a sarcastic grin.

Mutthashi opened her eyes. Just as I expected.

"It is time for the muhurtham". Let's go. We have to rush."

Mutthashi sat up in the bed.

"Do you want to change your mundu?"

Mutthashi shook her mundu to take out the crinkles and wore it again. She draped a sheet over her head. In one quick movement she got off the bed, took my hand and started walking.

Looking triumphantly at Ravunni Nair who still wore his mocking expression, Mutthashi and I stepped out. Kunjathaal and Neeli were at the gate. Hand in hand, the four of us ran. Mutthashi was faster than us. In fact she was pulling us. When we had passed the lane and reached the foot of the banyan tree we could hear the nadaswaram.

We went through the outer courtyard of the temple. It was jammed with people. No one noticed us. We had arrived in time. The bride and bridegroom were about to garland each other.

A beaming Mutthashi sat through the whole wedding. When the ceremony was over all the elder relatives and friends came forward to shower rice and flowers on the bride and bridegroom. Mutthashi looked at me. I scooped up a handful of rice and flowers and gave it to her.

I asked Kunjathaal. "Do you want some?"

Kunjathaal was looking at the bridegroom. Her eyes spat fire. The

damshtra slowly grew longer. And longer.

And when the bridegroom posed, bouquet in hand for a photo with Sarojini Edathi, I noticed Kunjathaal jump towards him. I burst into a loud scream. What happened after that I don't know. Only when I saw Sarojini Edathi with the new Ettan who has become her husband did I feel relieved. So Kunjathaal didn't do any harm. They invited me to go to their house after I got well. "If you were not feeling well, why did you come running to the temple like this, alone?" they asked.

"Not alone. Mutthashi came with me."

"Bhagwane. Bhagwane!" Amma began chanting.

"Ask Ravunni Nair. He saw us."

"My kutty's having one hallucination after another!" Amma moaned.

This has become their habit. They won't accept anything I say. They always invent something of their own.

To show them that I was saying the truth I described in detail how Mutthashi had come to the temple to shower rice and flowers on the married couple. All that they did was to look at each other and whisper.

After Sarojini Edathi and her husband's family left, they told everyone that Mutthashi was dead.

I said to myself, So what if she dies now. At least she saw the wedding.

✽

Mutthashi will not die. Mutthashi will not leave this house. There's still much to be done. Mutthashi is still to show me what herbs and roots are to be gathered and how the paste is to be made and applied for eruptions, wounds, swellings.

The white cloth with which Mutthashi had covered her body turned into wings. Mutthashi came towards me, flying. Before I could turn my eyes

from the courtyard, Mutthashi had landed on my bed. My happiness knew no bounds. I held Mutthashi in a tight embrace.

"You pretended you were dead and made a fool of all these people, no?" I asked.

Mutthashi laughed softly.

Do you know where Mutthashi is, Chechi? Chechi, you are a nurse, no? Then, Why are you not wearing the white coat nurses always wear?

Let everyone go, so what? The one who came last has not gone. Do you know who it is? She sits right behind me, a little girl. She wears my skirts, her hair is cropped short.

Yes, it is Mutthashi.

Chechi, let's play.

Chechi! Why are you running away? Why are you shouting and calling people? Has an earthquake started here too?

Mutthashi? Has Mutthashi also gone?

No, Mutthashi sits on top of the window still. How did she get there?

Yes. There, holding her hand, helping Mutthashi climb down — Yes that is them. So they have also come.

"Silly! You and your irritation. We hadn't gone anywhere," Kunjathaal whispered in my ear.

Now for kothengkallu and vattu and all my other games, there is a foursome. Mutthashikutty and I are partners. Kunjathaal and Neeli the other team. How well matched we are!

Ah! What more is there to wish for! ✽

Illustrations : Ripin Kalra

Translated by D.Krishna Ayyar and Raji Subramaniam.

Courtesy: Katha Prize Stories Vol:2

- Notes:**
1. *Ucchakkaanam* — A private term used by the household to describe the afternoon hours.
 2. *Parambu* — the large compound surrounding the household.
 3. *Yakshi* — a supernatural being usually in the form of a ravishingly beautiful woman.
 4. *Mundu* — the bottom half of the traditional two-piece outfit.
 5. *Damshtra* — the long pointed canines of a demoness.
 6. *Edathi* — elder sister.
 7. *Thampuratti* — a term of address usually reserved for the aristocracy.
 8. *Mantravadi* — a sorcerer.
 9. *Muhurtham* — the auspicious moment.

LIFE OF STRIFE

JAY GRIFFITHS

Speed has become a modern addiction. Fast cars, fast food, fast talk, fast bucks; subtlety suffers for the sake of speed. Not only small, but also slow is beautiful.

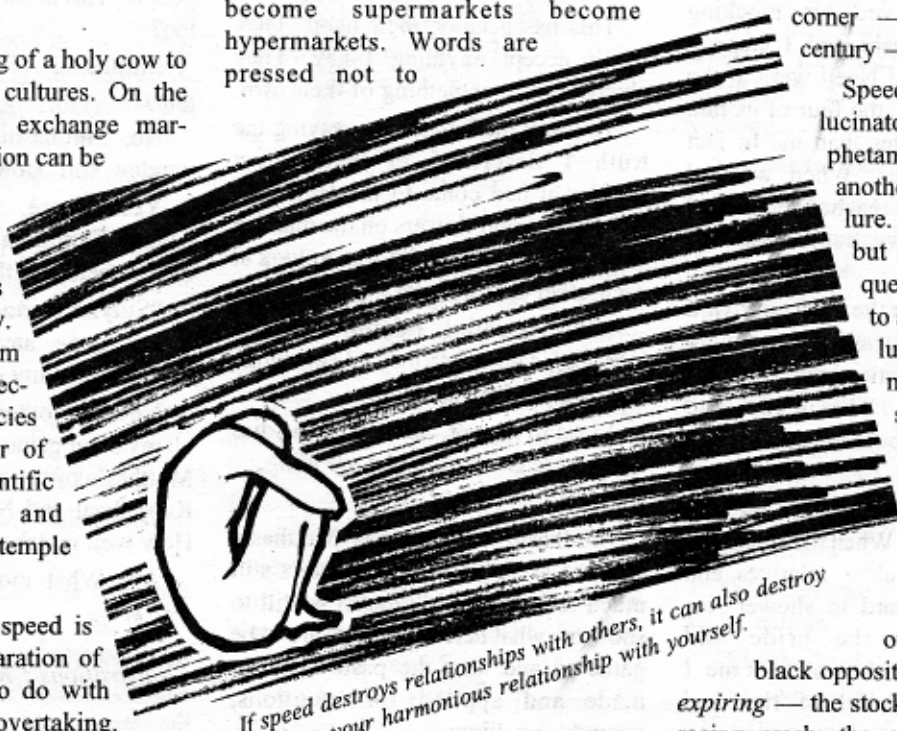
Take the cow. It can be hard to understand the deification of the cow in Indian villages. But pause. In westernized Delhi or Bombay, amid the fizzing pandemonium of the fast lane, watch the awesome cow in awesome slowness chew. Then you know.

Speed is something of a holy cow to modern westernized cultures. On the international foreign exchange markets, up to \$ 200 million can be turned over in little more than a minute. News media can communicate events all but instantaneously. Computers can perform 307 gigaflops per second. Transport policies sacrifice any number of Sites of Special Scientific Interest to it, and Brands Hatch is a temple to it.

The attraction of speed is only partly the exhilaration of acceleration; much to do with competition, with overtaking. The thrill is not in going fast, but in going faster than the rest. Mark Marchant, professional racing driver at Brands Hatch, says: "Overtaking, you begin to feel invincible."

Overtaking is a cultural emblem. In global financial terms, the kick is not for a company to be wealthy, but to be wealthier than its competitors, streamlined, like a car, to overtake. Products, too, are designed to overtake,

to supersede previous models, and to do so more and more quickly. In the recording industry, 78s were in pole position for sixty-one years. LPs for twenty-six years, cassettes for seven, and Cds, so far, for three. Language, too, is driven faster and faster, markets become supermarkets become hypermarkets. Words are pressed not to



If speed destroys relationships with others, it can also destroy your harmonious relationship with yourself.

supersede but to hypersede themselves.

One consumer desire overtakes another. Consumerism's druglike hallucinations of happiness rely on the fact that once needs are met, desires must be aggrandized. Faster and faster rates of acquisition of unnecessary products and their faster disposal feed, first, manufacturing industry, then landfill sites. Bulimia is indeed a disease of today: consumer society

speedily scoffs food beyond need, speedily reaches for the laxatives, and speedily excretes.

In a socially competitive - overtaking - world, speed is an index to status. The poor travel more slowly; their time is considered less valuable. They are overtaken by the rich and powerful, who are not to be kept waiting; for them the fastest cars, high-speed trains and plane shuttles. Oh, what transports of elites.

Besides competition, Mark Marchant articulates another attraction of speed: control. "Being on the ragged edge of the limit of control is exciting. You're not far away from the ultimate of not being in control." In racing terms, this is never truer than at the approach to corners. Is it chance that there is an acute cultural anxiety about a perceived lack of control at the next corner — the twenty-first century — approaching?

Speed-velocity is as hallucinatory as speed-amphetamine, and that is another part of its allure. It is only relative, but its siren call masquerades as an appeal to an absolute. Absolute instantaneousness, the white speed of thought or light, the Zen moment of inspiring, breathing in the breath of life.

But the danger of speed is in its black opposite, in the instant of expiring — the stock market crash, the racing crash, the computer crash, a culture speeding up to its expiry date, the darkness over the event horizon, the moment of death.

Both absolutes share the fascination of the almost unimaginable. The mind can barely hold the understanding for more than a split second, whether it be 'seeing' a koan or imagining a black hole. A cultural lust for speed mimics the excitement of inspiration, but in effect it is the morbid excitement of expiry, atrophy accelerated, final

and fantastic, the Global Black Monday.

The foreign exchange market is a speed-conscious place, and talking to one dealing at HSBC Midland in London is like meeting Lewis Carroll's White Rabbit. Hyperalert, fast of speech, eyes darting and breath jerky, he is high on speed, but he takes no drugs; the job is drug enough. He follows seventy to eighty scrolling headline newsflashes per hour, monitors a constantly changing aural environment, can turn over \$50 million in two to three minutes, and trade with twenty banks in less than sixty seconds.

He says he is "addicted to adrenalin", works "in hypermode", and admits "if you don't enjoy the rushes, you can't do the job." He is a man in love with speed. He describes his faults as speed-related: being easily frustrated by people, short-tempered and intolerant. His personal calls last, on average, five seconds. Are his friends intimidated by the speed he's going at? "Maybe, yes, but half the time I don't notice. I'm going too fast."

Personal relationships need to develop over time, with time, and speed destroys them, even while it provides a substitute. Speed itself is the hallucinatory friend. Speed stimulates, speed stops you feeling bored or lonely. If you can do a ton up on the motorway while eating chocolate, who needs sex? Speed bosses the White Rabbit and he bosses Alice, tetchy and intolerant. He has no friends, but he has his watch for company.

If speed destroys relationships with others, it can also destroy your harmonious relationship with yourself; travelling too fast gives you a sort of spiritual jet lag. Bruce Chatwin notes the white explorers in Africa forcing the pace of their African porters, who, within sight of their destination, sat and refused to move, waiting, they said, for their spirits to catch up with their bodies.

Travelling slowly offers more avenues, more choices, more possibilities for meandering or stopping at will. The faster the traveller, the less autonomous they are, the more reliant

they must be, for safety, on strict, exterior laws and the directions of systems. Speed fosters passivity. Driving at speed, the individual is driven by roads. Socially worrisome, individuals accustomed to being told what to do in one arena are more biddable and malleable in other walks — or drives — of life.

Gentle motion — the relaxed pace of the traditional street, for instance — is hurt by speed. Jean Chesneaux, author of *Brave Modern World*, writes: 'The street as an art of life is disappearing in favour of traffic arteries. People drive through them on the way to somewhere else.' And John Whitelegg, director of

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Eco-Logica Ltd, an environment and transport consultancy, says: "English has no positive word for lingering on streets."

His point applies to the social effect of transport, but can be taken further: in English, slowness in general is often treated with pity (retarded), derision (sluggish), or with suspicion (loitering). It is Latin which will yield the wisdom of slowness — *festina lente* (make haste slowly) — and it is Italian which will dignify it with *largo* (to be performed slowly and broadly) or offer the radiant serenity of *dolce far niente* (literally, sweet doing nothing).

Diction reveals 'speed approval' in our cultural perceptions. Visual perception tells another story. At speed, perspectives are falsified. To speak to the driver, simple little commands of an emasculated language lie in elasticated letters on the road. Spun fast, colours bleed into each other. At speed, foreground is slapped up flat onto foreground. Variations of rhythm and pace are lost, surprise is a hazard, oddness evened out. Subtlety suffers for the sake of speed.

Very like an apple. Chesneaux writes: 'The range of cultivated plants has dramatically declined as a result of the race for grossly profitable varieties, for rapid growth. In 1985, 71% of French apple production came from the Golden Delicious variety alone.' This is the twentieth century's 'Golden Apple', the booby prize in our culture's race against nature, that cliché in the language of fruit, that pappy apology for an apple. Atlanta eat your heart out.

In news media, speed must be a virtue. The press pressed ahead for so long in Fleet Street. But the increasing frequency of bulletins on radio, or CNN's rolling permanence, penalizes subtlety, analysis and detail in its pride at its speed: The concentration span shortens. Sound bites bite the hand of ideas which feeds them. These messengers of news, like the original marathon runner, take risks: not so much from drawing level with content — 'the medium is the message' — but speed overtaking content — the marathon is the message. The runner drops dead, the race run, but the message dying with him.

Speed adversely affects language; at speed you can afford no margins of irony, no space for play. Fast language is a faddy fashion victim, buying buzzwords, flavours of the month, overused, worn out and discarded. Verbal speeding short-changes language. 'Be brief.' Would that it were as common to see 'Be prolix. Be funny. Digress.' For the sake of efficient, streamlined transmission, you lose loose intuited allusive nuances. Speed insists on the cliché, the verbal path well beaten, the motorway. Language wants to take the scenic route, but

freedom to roam is made a trespassory offence and language is taken prisoner by speed, let out only occasionally on parole.

Skim-talking and skim-reading promote skim-thinking. Thoughts summoned at speed are likely to be not the best thoughts but simply the first, the habitual response, thoughts automatic as opposed to thoughts idiomatic, reflective or ruminative. (The root of which, of course, is 'chewing the cud.' Respect to that cow.)

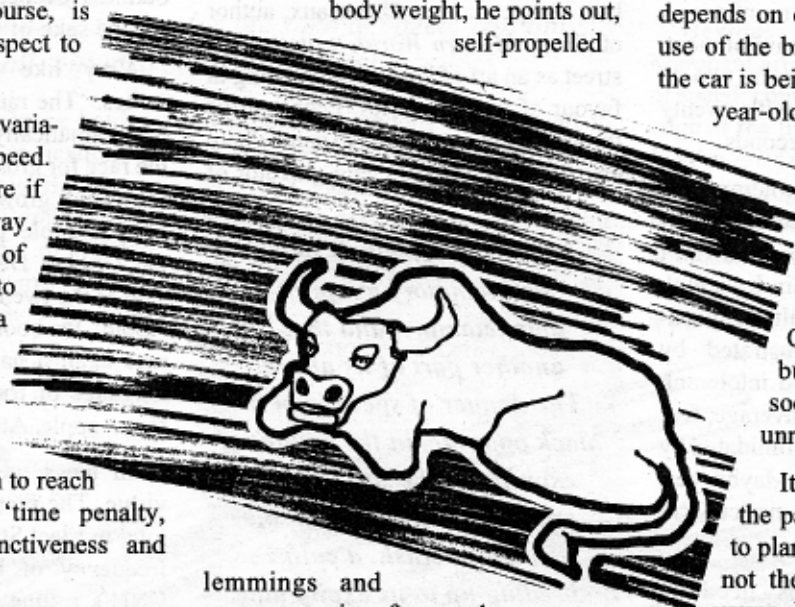
The subtlety of place variation, too, is lost at speed. You could be anywhere if you're on a motorway. Speed blurs concepts of near and far, leading to what Whitelegg calls a 'loss of place particularity' — the homogeneity of tourist spots. Slowness, by contrast, the length of time taken to reach a place, operates a 'time penalty, protecting place distinctiveness and culture'.

Fast travel is a kind of visual consumerism, offering constant replacement of one view with ensuing, newly identical, views. Travel replicates the model of consumer desires; once first wishes are met, desires must be augmented. As Whitelegg says: 'People consume the benefit of speed by spending it on distance.' Transport studies show that time saved in one journey is used to make additional journeys not previously considered. Mainly in cars. But as Whitelegg points out: "The congestion costs which motorists impose on others are not borne by car drivers." According to Mayer Hillman, Senior Fellow Emeritus at the Policy Studies Institute, increased public transport investment isn't the answer. "Emphasis should be put on walking and cycling. And if that leads to more limited travel," he goes on impishly, "so — fine."

The pollution caused for the sake of the car's speed is also not paid for by the driver. According to the Hillman imp, there is a way to get car drivers to

take a taste of their own emissions: "Car manufacturers should be required to design vehicles where the exhaust pipe terminates within the vehicle."

But there is a 'green' car. It runs on tap water and toasted tea cakes, and has an inbuilt gym. It is called a bicycle. "It is far more sophisticated and useful than anything NASA has ever done," Whitelegg sighs. In terms of energy consumption per metre versus body weight, he points out, self-propelled



lemmings and passenger aircraft are the least efficient. A bod on a bike is the most efficient.

Car drivers get their benefits — speed and comfort — paid for by other road users in the coin of fear, injury, pollution and congestion. Emotionally, fast drivers get the excitement of speed while their passengers feel the drawbacks; anxiety and powerlessness. There is an analogy with westernized economic structures, where those in the financial driving seat get the rewards of the system, while the dispossessed, without access to the controls, suffer the pain of job insecurity and poverty.

Signs are that many passengers are suffering speeding sickness, and these dizzy dissidents of speed are calling for the vehicle of society to slow down, most wisely and wittily in the road protest movement. Environmentalists see our pace for outstripping nature's speed — we pollute far faster than nature can clean, and we plunder more than it can renew.

Nature is one victim of speed, and children are another — from traffic accidents to unnaturally speeded up life stages. In Japan, education is compressed, a massive, metaphoric G-force, squeezing the childhood out of the child and provoking the highest child-suicide rate in the world.

Our far ancestors depended on a need for acceleration, in fight or flight. Our children's survival, by contrast, depends on our judicious, and speedy use of the brakes. The trouble is that the car is being driven by a seventeen-year-old, hooked on speed, seeing the world's resources as something to be used up before anyone else gets to them. Fatuous adolescence gives us all a spin in its souped-up Ford Capri sooner or later, but modern westernized society is characterized by unrelenting adolescence.

It is a culture ignorant of the past and viciously refusing to plan for the future, respecting not the old, cherishing not the young. Its exports are adolescent: fast cars, fast foods, fast talk, fast bucks. Fast is everything, puerile and premature, modern westernized cultures could never have produced the *Kama Sutra*, would never pause to consider the point of orgasm maintained for hours. In contrast to the duration of love, and the love of duration, modern society's great love affair is with obsolescence. Jeune in its desire for greed above need, speed above subtlety, it crashes up through the gears, cornering too fast, flinging grit in the eyes of the ancient cow, in ancient slowness chewing. In rumination still. ☿

Illustrations : Oroon

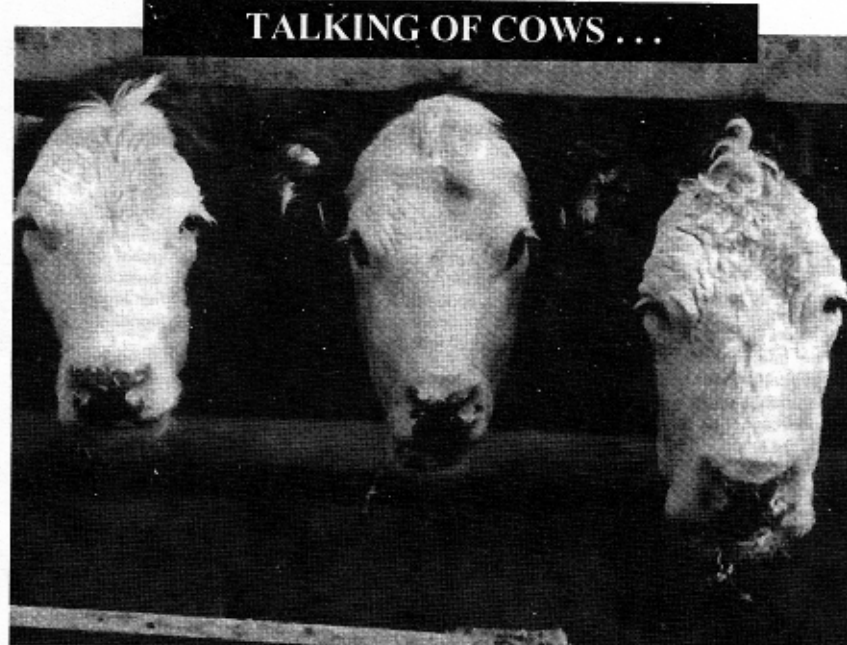
Jay Griffiths writes fiction, theatre and journalism. This piece is the first part of her series on *Time for The Guardian*. She lives in England.

Courtesy: Resurgence

The 'mad cow disease' is in the news these days. The other name for it is BSE (Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy). This is a deadly disease that has already devastated the national cattle herd in Britain and has jumped from cattle to humans. In humans it is called Creutzfeldt-Jacob Disease (CJD) after two German doctors.

The epidemic has been linked to feeding cattle the remains of infected cattle. In effect, of trying to turn herbivores into cannibals. The first signs of the disease were found in sheep and was known as 'scrapie'. Infected sheep were fed to cows which got BSE. The remains of these cows were processed in 'rendering plants' which are some sort of 'secret factories'. Here, the inedible parts of animals such as bones, feathers, heads, feet and intestines are converted to animal feed. The inclusion of 'infected' parts in the animal feed caused the disease to spread. Eating infected beef is a way of the disease spreading to humans.

The UK government has been consistently misleading the public by not disclosing the scientific evidence on BSE. Governments and scientists will increasingly lie to the public in



order to protect corporate profits. Putting trade and commerce and the multi-billion-dollar beef industry above health and ecology has created food systems which produce disease instead of health and nutrition. Globalisation of food systems and factory farming has caused the 'Macdonaldisation' of world food, creating an uniform culture of burgers. We in the Third World need to take lessons from what is happening in the UK before we wipe out our

disease-resistant breeds and the ecological basis of our agriculture.

Jeremy Seabrook asks, "Will this potentially disastrous affair open up a wider discussion, or will it be all managed into silence again, the unrelenting silence that negates everything but the holy, sacred, unappealable truths of the market? We know the answer to that also"

(With references to *Third World Resurgence*).

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*It is said that an ounce of sense contained in the **Panchatantra** is better than a ton of scholarship. Most of us are familiar with it from our childhood as 'once-upon-a-time' stories and have read them in abridged forms or in comics. Rarely have we encountered a literal translation in verse form. Indeed, these wise verses, often epigrammatic in style, go to make the real character of the **Panchatantra**. The stories are charming when regarded as pure narrative, but it is the beauty, wisdom and wit of the verses which lift the **Panchatantra** above the best story books.*

*The **Panchatantra** is a 'niti shastra' or textbook of 'niti'. The word 'niti' roughly means the 'wise conduct of life'. It is witty, mischievous and profoundly sane. The word, '**Panchatantra**' means, the 'Five Books', the 'Pentateuch'. Each of the five books are independent, consisting of a framing story with numerous, inserted stories, told by one or another of the characters of the main narrative. The device of the framing story is familiar in oriental works, as in the **Arabian Nights**. The large majority of the actors are animals, who have, of course, a fairly constant character. Thus, the lion is strong, but dull of wit, the jackal, crafty, the heron stupid, the cat, a hypocrite. The animal actors present far more vividly and shrewdly undeceived and free of all sentimentality, a view, that piercing the humbug of every false ideal, reveals with incomparable wit, the source of lasting joy. And this is how it happened...*

*One Vishnusharman shrewdly
gleaning
All wordly wisdom's inner meaning.
In these five books the
charm compresses
Of all such books the world
possesses.*

In the southern country is a city called Maiden's Delight. There lived a king named Immortal Power. He was familiar with all the works dealing with the wise conduct of life. His feet were made dazzling by the tangle of rays of light from jewels in the diadems of mighty kings who knelt before him. He had reached the far shore of all the arts that embellish life. This king had three sons. Their names were Rich-Power, Fierce-Power and Endless-Power and they were supreme blockheads.

Now when the king perceived that they were hostile to education, he summoned his counsellors and said. "Gentlemen, it is known to you that these sons of mine, being hostile to education, are lacking in discernment. So when I behold them, my kingdom brings me no happiness, though all external thorns are drawn. For there is wisdom in the proverb:

*Of sons unborn, or dead, or fools,
Unborn or dead will do:*

*They cause a little grief, no doubt;
But fools, a long life through.*

and again:

*To what good purpose can a cow
That brings no calf nor
milk be bent?*

*Or why beget a son who proves
A dunce and disobedient?*

Some means must therefore be devised to awaken their intelligence."

And they, one after another, replied, "O King, first one learns grammar, in twelve years. If this subject has somehow been mastered, then one masters the books on religion and practical life. Then the intelligence awakens."

But one of their number, a counsellor named Keen said: "O King, the duration of life is limited, and the verbal sciences require much time for mastery. Therefore let some kind of epitome be devised to wake their intelligence. There is a proverb that says:

*Since verbal sciences
have no final end,*

*Since life is short, and
obstacles impend,
Let central facts be picked and
firmly fixed
As swans extract the milk
with water mixed.*

"Now, there is a Brahmin here named Vishnusharman, with a reputation for competence in numerous sciences. Entrust the princes to him. He will certainly make them intelligent in a twinkling."

When the king had listened to this, he summoned Vishnusharman and said, "Holy sir, as a favour to me you must make these princes incomparable masters of the art of practical life. In return, I will bestow upon you a hundred land grants."

And Vishnusharman made this answer to the king, "O King, listen. Here is the plain truth. I am not the man to sell good learning for a hundred land grants. But if I do not, in six months' time, make the boys acquainted with the art of intelligent living, I will give up my own name. Let us cut the matter short. Listen to my lion roar. My boasting arises from no greed for cash. Besides, I have no use for money; I am eighty years old, and all the objects of sensual desire have lost their charm. But in order that your request may be granted, I will show a sporting spirit with reference to artistic matters. Make a note of the date. If I fail to render your sons, in six months' time, incomparable masters of the art of intelligent living, then His Majesty is at liberty to show me His Majestic bare bottom."

When the king, surrounded by his counsellors, had listened to the Brahmin's highly unconventional promise, he was dumbstruck. He entrusted the princes to him, and experienced supreme content.

Meanwhile, Vishnusharman took the boys, went home, and made them learn by heart, five books which he composed and called

- (i) *The Loss of Friends*
- (ii) *The Winning of Friends*
- (iii) *Crows and Owls*
- (iv) *Loss of Gains*
- (v) *Ill-considered Action.*

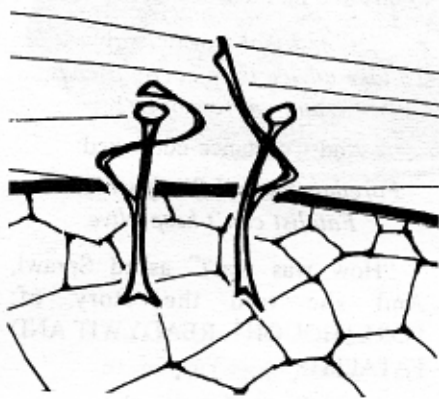
These the princes learned, and in six months' time they answered the prescription. Since that day this work on the art of intelligent living, called the *Panchatantra*, or the Five Books, has travelled the world, aiming at awakening the intelligence in the young.

THE STORY OF THE LAST EPISODE

Lively the Bull confided to Victor the Jackal that his friendship with Rusty the Lion must have been ruined by Rusty's jealous counsellors, just as the lion's spotless and harmless relationship with a carpenter was threatened by his hangers on, a crow and a jackal. Under these circumstances, the embittered Lively felt there was no other recourse but to battle it out with his erstwhile close companion, dying a heroic death if need be. Alarmed at this, Victor the shrewd jackal quickly sought to dissuade him with the tale of Sprawl the

plover and his wife Constance. Constance wished to safeguard her eggs by laying them far away from the seashore lest the tide should wash them away, but Sprawl felt his good friend, the ocean would not do him such a grievous wrong. Constance though, laughed at his boastful suggestion that it would not dare to harm him. Advising him to be more realistic and judicious in his thinking, besides heeding the advice of well meaning friends, she told him the tale of SHELL NECK, SLIM AND TRIM.

SHELL-NECK, SLIM AND GRIM



In a certain lake lived a turtle named Shell-Neck. He had as friends two ganders whose names were Slim and Grim. Now in the vicissitudes of time there came a twelve-year drought, which begot ideas of this nature in the two ganders: "This lake has gone dry. Let us seek another body of water. However, we must first say farewell to Shell-Neck, our dear and long-proved friend."

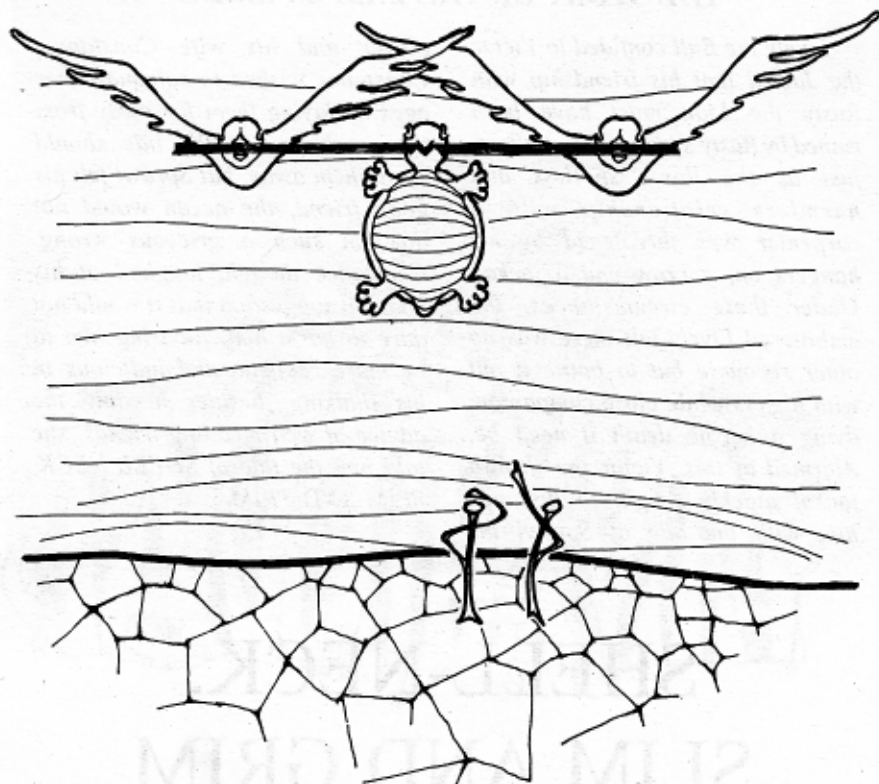
When they did so, the turtle said: "Why do you bid me farewell? I am a water-dweller, and here I should perish very quickly from the scant supply of water and from grief at loss of you.

Therefore, if you feel any affection for me, please rescue me from the jaws of this death. Besides, as the water dries in this lake, you two suffer nothing beyond a restricted diet, while to me it means immediate death. Consider which is more serious, loss of food or loss of life."

But they replied: "We are unable to take you with us since you are a water-creature without wings." Yet the turtle continued: "There is a possible device. Bring a stick of wood." This they did, whereupon the turtle gripped the middle of the stick between his teeth, and said; "Now take firm hold with your bills, one on each side, fly up, and travel with even flight through the sky, until we discover another desirable body of water."

But they objected: "There is a hitch in this fine plan. If you happen to indulge in the smallest conversation, then you will lose your hold on the stick, will fall from a great height, and will be dashed to bits."

"Oh," said the turtle, "from this moment I take a vow of silence, to last as long as we are in heaven." So they



carried out the plan, but while the two ganders were painfully carrying the turtle over a neighboring city, the people below noticed the spectacle, and there arose a confused buzz of talk as they asked: "What is this cartlike object that two birds are carrying through the atmosphere?"

Hearing this, the doomed turtle was heedless enough to ask: "What are these people chattering about?" The moment he spoke, the poor simpleton lost his grip and fell to the ground.

FORETHOUGHT, READYWIT, AND FATALIST

In a great lake lived three full-grown fishes, whose names were Forethought, Readywit, and Fatalist. Now one day the fish named Forethought overheard passers by on the bank and fishermen saying: "There are plenty of fish in this pond. Tomorrow we go fishing."

And persons who wanted meat cut him to bits in a moment with sharp knives.

*"And that is why I say:
To take advice from kindly friends,....
and the rest of it."*

And Constance continued:

*Forethought and Readywit thrive
Fatalist can't keep alive.*

"How was that?" asked Sprawl, And she told the story of: FORETHOUGHT, READYWIT AND FATALIST

On hearing this, Forethought reflected: "This looks bad. Tomorrow or the day after they will be sure to come here. I will take Readywit and Fatalist and move to another lake whose waters are not troubled." So he called them and put the question.

Thereupon Readywit said: "I have

lived long in this lake and cannot move in such a hurry. If fishermen come here, then I will protect myself by some means devised for the occasion."

But poor, doomed Fatalist said: "There are sizeable lakes elsewhere. Who knows whether they will come here or not? One should not abandon the lake of his birth merely because of such small gossip. And the proverb says:

*Since scamp and sneak and snake
So often undertake
A plan that does not thrive,
The world wags on, alive.*

Therefore I am determined not to go." And when Forethought realized that their minds were made up, he went to another body of water.

On the next day, when he had gone, the fishermen with their boys beset the inner pool, cast a net, and caught all the fish without exception. Under these circumstances Readywit, while still in the water, played dead. And since they thought: "This big fellow died without help," they drew him from the net and laid him on the bank, from which he wriggled back to safety in the water. But Fatalist stuck his nose into the meshes of the net, struggling until they pounded him repeatedly with clubs and so killed him.

*"And that is why I say:
Forethought and Readywit thrive;
Fatalist can't keep alive."*

"My dear," said the plover, "Why do you think me to be like Fatalist?"

*Horses, elephants, and iron,
Water, woman, man,
Sticks and stones and
clothes are built
On a different plan".*

"Feel no anxiety. Who can bring humiliation upon you while my arms protect you?"

So Constance laid her eggs, but the ocean, who had listened to the previous conversation, thought: "Well, Well! There is sense in the saying:

*Of self-conceit all creatures show
An adequate supply:
The plover lies with claws
upstretched
To prop the falling sky.*

I will just put his power to the test."

So the next day, when the two plovers had gone foraging, he made a long reach with his wave-hands and eagerly seized the eggs. Then when the hen-plover returned and found the nursery empty, she said to her husband: "See what has happened to poor me. The ocean seized my eggs today. I told you more than once that we should move, but you were as stupid as Fatalist and would not go. Now I am so sad at the loss of my children that I have decided to burn myself."

"My dear," said the plover, "wait until you witness my power, until I dry up that rascally ocean with my bill." But she replied: "My dear husband, how can you fight the ocean? Furthermore,

*Gay simpletons who fight,
Not estimating right
The foe's power and their own,
Like moths in flame atone."*

"My dear" said the plover, "you should not say such things."

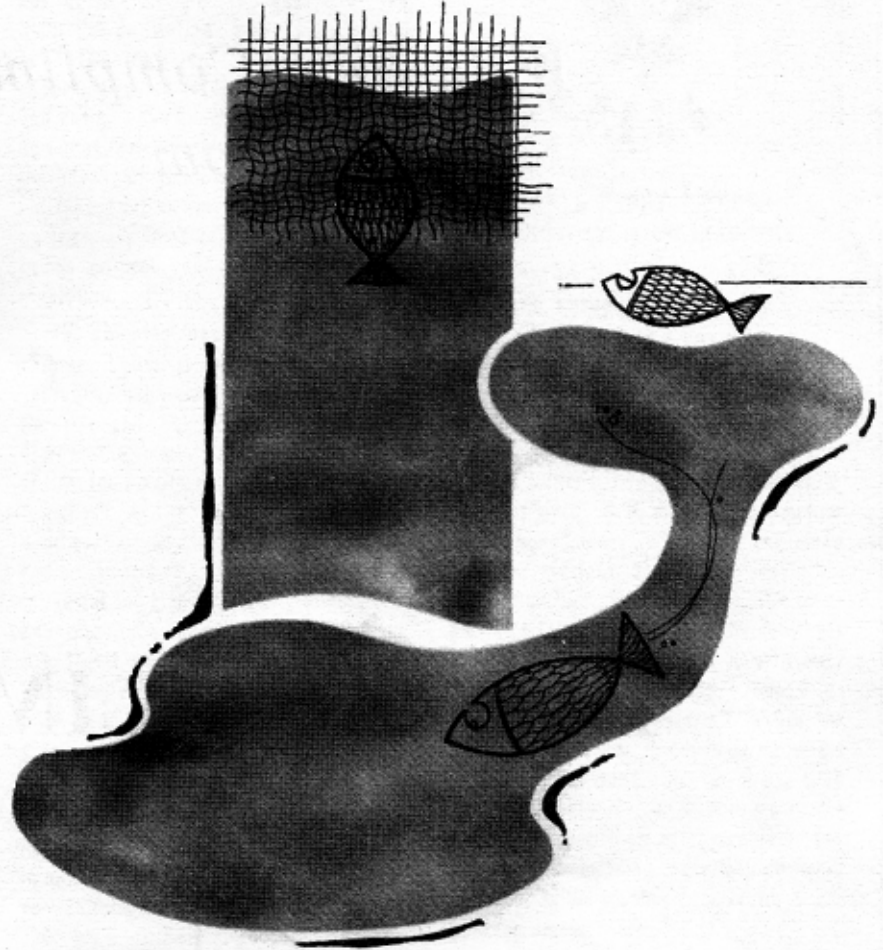
*The sun's new-risen beams
Upon the mountains fall:
Where glory is cognate,
Age matters not at all.*

With this bill I shall dry up the water to the last drop, and turn the sea into dry land." "Darling," said his wife. "With a bill that holds one drop how will you dry up the ocean, into which pour without ceasing, the Ganges and the Indus, bearing the water of nine times nine hundred tributary streams. Why talk nonsense?" But the plover said:

*"Success is rooted in the will;
And I possess an iron-strong bill;
Long days and nights before me lie:
Why should not ocean's flood go dry?
The highest glory to attain
Asks enterprise and manly strain:
The sun must first to Libra climb
Before he routs the cloudy time".*

"Well," said his wife, "if you feel that you must make war on the ocean, at least call other birds to your aid before you begin. For the proverb says:

*In a great lake lived three full-grown fishes, whose names were
Forethought, Readywit, and Fatalist.*



*A host where each is weak
Brings victory to pass:
The elephant is bound
By woven ropes of grass.*

And again:

*Woodpecker and sparrow
With froggy and gnat,
Attacking en masse, laid
The elephant flat."*

"How was that?" asked Sprawl. And Constance told the story of THE DUEL BETWEEN ELEPHANT AND SPARROW ❧

(To be continued...)

Illustrations: Oroon

In 1924, Arthur W. Ryder, the well known American oriental scholar translated the Panchatantra from Sanskrit to English. It is one of the best of existing translations in any foreign language. The text here translated, dates back from the year 1199 A.D. We are happy to serialise and present the Panchatantra, interspersing verse and prose as translated by Ryder and published by Jaico.

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Green Buildings

According to the seminal Brundtland Report, sustainability is defined as 'meeting the needs of the present without compromising on the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. Farmer Wendell Berry took this definition a little further when he said that, paraphrasing from *A Primer on Sustainable Building* (B. Browning and D. Barnett), a good (sustainable) solution will solve more than one problem, while not making new problems; satisfy a whole range of criteria and be good in all respects; accept given limits using, so far as possible, what is at hand; improve the balances, symmetries, or harmonies within a pattern. Together, these aspects are termed as 'solving for pattern'.

Before the advent of the Industrial Revolution in the 18th century, beginning with the invention of the steam engine, society was essentially agrarian. Lifestyles were rooted in traditional customs and social and cultural patterns, and built form was dictated by the earth and rooted in organic processes. Man and nature and built form coexisted harmoniously; the concept of 'green' architecture and lifestyles did not exist, for there was no need for it to. However, the Industrial Revolution brought with it not only access to technology, but also access to cheap fossil fuel energy, building materials rooted in technological advancement (e.g. large sheets of glass), and ways of making a space artificially comfortable in different seasons with the flick of a switch (air conditioning in summer, central heating in winter). Though fossil fuels are not renewable and are rapidly depleting, building materials like steel, glass and aluminium have high embodied energy values, and the operational energy as well as costs of running a large HVAC system is high, builders are still reluctant to discard them in favor of more energy as well as material-efficient green buildings. This is because builders and architects deem that the short-term immediate advantages of using high energy materials and systems highlight the importance of technology and reduce in their eyes the long term benefits of sustainable methods.

Another reason for the small number of green buildings is that many builders and

architects, as well as homeowners, still don't know about its benefits. Granted that not a few hundred years ago, buildings, landscapes as well as communities were rooted in sustainability, but again, all this changed after the Industrial Revolution. Steeped since then in technology and the frameworks governing it, the lessons of past planning and design have been forgotten. It is only now that they are slowly being revived by the advent of green buildings, but it may yet take a lot of time before builders and homeowners brush off their scepticism for things natural and embrace the 'green revolution'.

The planning, design and construction of green buildings requires an integrated approach, beginning from the survey of the site and its surrounding resources, down to the smallest window and overhang design for maximum shade. Conventional designers do not wish to invest the additional time, effort, concentration, dedication and attention to details needed to master the steps towards attaining such an integrated green architecture. For them, it is faster and simpler to put in existing technologies where they don't have to invest too much time or effort, or add green systems on a piecemeal basis, a little here, a little there.

When it comes to preservation of natural habitats and bio-regions, an important part of any green development, conventional builders prefer to flatten out the land rather than preserve the biodiversity, and use only what can be constructed upon. For them, more land signifies maximum development, which in turn signifies maximum profits. Instead of analysing the long-term effects of such development, they prefer to stick with the short term benefits accrued to themselves.

Builders are still wary of 'experimentation', a factor which they feel dogs green development. Any building project is endowed with its share of pitfalls, hurdles, rising costs, time constraints and fickle weather conditions, and builders feel that the experimentation involved in green design further complicates the building process and adds to the pitfalls already existing.

Energy-efficient 'green' building materials are sometimes difficult to find or obtain readily from conventional stores or wholesalers, and then if they have to be ordered specially then it negates their appeal in the mind of homeowners. In addition, often energy-efficient systems,



Young peppy Swapna Sundaram is an architect studying in California. Here are some 'Swapnesian' views on the cosmos.

though more than making up their cost in the long run, cost more than conventional systems initially, like superwindows which can cost upto 50 % more than standard double-paned glass (which fact can make builders overlook their high insulation values and light transmittance). The other barrier is that builders and homeowners still don't trust the viability, efficiency and strength of recycled, reused or alternate building materials (such as earth). They prefer to buy new materials each time they build a house, or use tried and tested materials like steel and concrete (inspite of their high energy values), and relegate the building materials of razed buildings to the crusher, incinerator or the garbage dump.

Alternate sewage systems based on a biological approach, for example, water treatment using aquatic plants and algae in a greenhouse setting, are also important components of green architecture, as they use less energy and chemicals, are cheaper to operate, provide natural habitats and fertilizer. However, builders and homeowners prefer to look at the negative aspects of alternate sewage systems, especially when it comes to choosing a composting toilet over a conventional one - composting toilets can smell, they can't adapt to irregular or pulse usage, they require regular maintenance.

Finally, builders feel that green buildings have no marketability; for them the safest path is the tried-and-true one. They feel that the marketplace is not interested in green buildings, since no one is building them. However, they forget that such buildings first need to be constructed to gauge the marketplace's reaction. ☾

MADHYA PRADESH RANKED FIRST IN THE COUNTRY

First	✓	In the implementation of the <i>Prime Minister's Rozgar Yojana</i> consecutively in the last two years
First	✓	In the implementation of Twenty Point Programme this year
First	✓	In the implementation of national scheme for liberation and rehabilitation of people engaged in scavenging.
First	✓	In utilisation of foodgrains under the <i>Jawahar Rozgar Yojana</i> with MP accounting for seventy per cent of foodgrains used at national level
First	✓	In the implementation of <i>Indira Awas Yojana</i> for rural housing this year
First State	✓	In the country to conduct elections to panchayats after the 73rd Amendment
First State	✓	In the country to put selected programmes for livelihood security, primary health care and basic education in a mission - mode by launching <i>seven Rajiv Gandhi Missions</i>
First State	✓	In the country to prepare <i>Human Development Report</i> to measure attainments relating to human development and thus ensure priority attention and public scrutiny
First State	✓	In the country to introduce social audit by <i>gram sabhas</i> of all development works done by government departments. These done at <i>gram sabhas</i> compulsorily held on 26 January, 14 April, 20 August and 2 October each year
First State	✓	In the country to give wide ranging powers to recruit teachers and doctors to gram panchayats and district panchayats
First State	✓	In the country to initiate a barefoot doctor scheme to have one <i>Jan Swasthya Rakshak</i> in each of the state's 70,000 villages
First State	✓	In the country to operationalise a toll road as the beginning to private sector investment in infrastructure

**Our efforts in the last two years have made us come first in the country.
This is not enough for us because we have a long way to go.**



That people actually read this magazine and more importantly this stupid column is a revelation!! I happened to read a letter written by one Indira

Vijaysimha of Bangalore who wrote in to share how she chuckled upon reading this column despite the pressing problems of shifting house for the nth time. Well, if that is the effect of this column – that it actually makes someone chuckle somewhere – it does well the wasted paper this trash consumes.

So much trash around and many trashy shows abound. Let's look at the Femina Miss India show. Our fine Indian women parading around in *chaddis* and little else. Looks like this is one event where the feminists can't seem to make any difference. Why should they protest when all the participants have noble ambitions of becoming Mother Teresas or Sarojini Naidus – "we want to care for the little orphans of the world" or "we want to be ambassadors of peace and represent India abroad". And then proceed to enter the remunerative world of haute couture only to vanish forever into the folds of softest silk and drown in all the perfumes of Arabia. The panel of judges for the show were impressive. But only Rekha got the applause and when she waved to the crowds they shouted, "Yah, we want Rekha, *jisko humne dekha*". And what they did *dekho* on the show was a mini display of what history and fashion in India has come to be. After (or before, I forget) the *chaddis* came the period-costumes. Maybe the Abu Jani team forgot that the clothes have to fit and sell too. A straight case of starch on starch considering the way they walked!

Then there was Kamal Siddhu (Sidoo) who could barely pronounce or *desi* names properly. Vandana sounded like ban-da-na to be worn a la Phoolan Devi. And then came the dance show that was neither

10° SQUINT

ASHISH KHOKAR

A column inspired by a school of ancient Greek philosophers founded by Antisthenes, popularly known as the School of Cynics. THE EYE places, amidst bundles of hope and idealism, one such cynic who will bash at... well everything. We hope this column appeals to the diehard cynic who woke up in the morning, stubbed his toe and hated the world. The writer's views (which are expressed in a rather humorous tone) are his own (although we secretly agree with most of them).

pantomime, nor Ottan Thullal, nor Chhau nor anything. Finally I came to the conclusion that the title of the whole show was appropriate, Miss India (as in give it a miss). Much misses but you don't miss much.

Many misses a la cleavage now sell cars. Each of these machines cost a fortune for the driving pleasure of which there are no roads. Jaguars and Rolls Royces come for about 25 lakhs, the Benz for 20 lakhs, the Astra at 9, the Cielo at 6 and the Esteem at 5. These are already on the road jostling for space. Maruti started off as a peoples' car. You are inclined to agree when you see the number of 'people' squeezed into it. Remember the happy Khanna family – Mr, fat Mrs, Mr's

mother, four children licking Nirula's ice creams and Ramu to look after the littlest Khanna. All returning from a 'paaddi'. Sanjay Gandhi who wanted to be on terra firma driving his toy, the Maruti, is long since gone trying to fly a plane. His brother meanwhile got grounded when all he wanted to do was to fly a plane.

It is *hawala* when it is not *gawala*. When it is not *hawala* it is *gawala*. Milking the animal husbandry sector seemed easy for Laloo who proved that he wasn't so *lalloo* or bovine after all. Imagine the levels of corruption in sectors where contracts and bidders abound! What is happening here, I ask. We have achieved what the ruling white hand could not achieve to perfection over five hundred years, destruction of our civilisation. We have states that do not want to share water, we have states that are flooded. We have acute famine in Orissa and we have five star hotels that sell bread at the price of gold. Thank God for organisations like the Agyawanti Food Bank which takes left-over food from five star hotels and gives it to the poor.

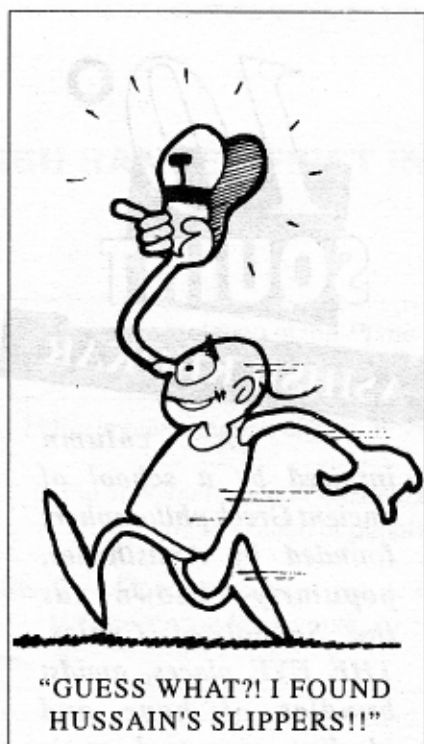
Poor Gandhi! He won't even be allowed his favourite expletive, *Hé Ram*, were he alive today. You know why, I don't have to explain. He said those two words when he was assassinated, now he could be assassinated for saying those two words. For they are volatile indeed!

Let's take a look at the arts. This is one area where there is a sense of discipline and propriety, but watch out, it is falling victim to marketing and hard sell. There are those who celebrate their own fiftieth birthday with great pomp and show. Need we tell them that what's more important is to be remembered fifty years after their death? What sells is not traditional quality in the arts. Yet if Govinda comes shaking Karishma, a stadium fills up. Michael Joseph Jackson looms large and makes news about his child 'upliftment' programme. When he is not busy mock-marrying and divorcing 133 days later, he is in Brazil 'shooting' under the protection of gangsters. Why I write all this is to share (in anguish)

the outreach of such a culture. A very eminent, violin maestro comes to stay at our home. Our landlady's Modern School-going daughter attends his concert (organised by yet another of those do-good type of organisations, SPIC MACAY who else!) in her school. Needless to say she hated it, and that too said with a sour face.

Let's give it all (culture I mean) a decent burial. Nothing official about it, Sachin would say if Pepsi pays him enough to say anything they want stated.

All this is stating the obvious you might say. But perhaps one lone voice can go far. Of course, this lone voice need not be a saint or savant, he can just be stupid and senile. The fact that someone sitting in faraway Bangalore is going to read this makes me chuckle. ☞



Ashish Khokar finds life in India and Indians totally amusing. He loves to laugh it off but deep inside, there is the sadness for a country getting steadily eroded of its own ways. He is a full time writer anyway, so he does not know what more to do, other than being the dance critic for *The Times Of India* and columnist for *First City*, in addition to being a biographer, photographer and cultural administrator who served the Sahitya Kala Parishad, Festivals of India in France, Sweden, Germany and China; INTACH and Martand Singh Consultants. He also scripts and anchors TV programmes on the arts and edits a bi-monthly, *Rasamanjari*.

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BOOK REVIEW

BRIDAL CAVES - A SEARCH FOR THE ADIVASI KHOVAR TRADITION

BULU IMAM, 1995 INTACH,
NEW DELHI.

S. C. MALIK

This is a profusely illustrated study of the wall paintings carried out by the *adivasi* women of Hazaribag, in Bihar. This area has been well-known for the occurrence of rock-shelters on which paintings have been done since prehistoric times. Bulu Imam has brought to light not only many new rock shelters but also traced the continuities of the art traditions since palaeolithic times in the context of art symbols as they occur in the modern Khovar art as practiced by *adivasi* women. This study is set against the background of environment and subsistence patterns, and highlights the need for conservation of this precious tradition which is being threatened by mining operations in the area. It is important to note this, since many areas in India where traditional continuities are still alive, are under threat and have also been swallowed by the unchecked and unthought greed of modern industrial expansion. Precious heritage, for values that are of universal nature are being wiped out. One has to be grateful to Bulu Imam and his family, friends and workers for doing this painstaking

work in a remote area where economic exploitation is threatening its existence.

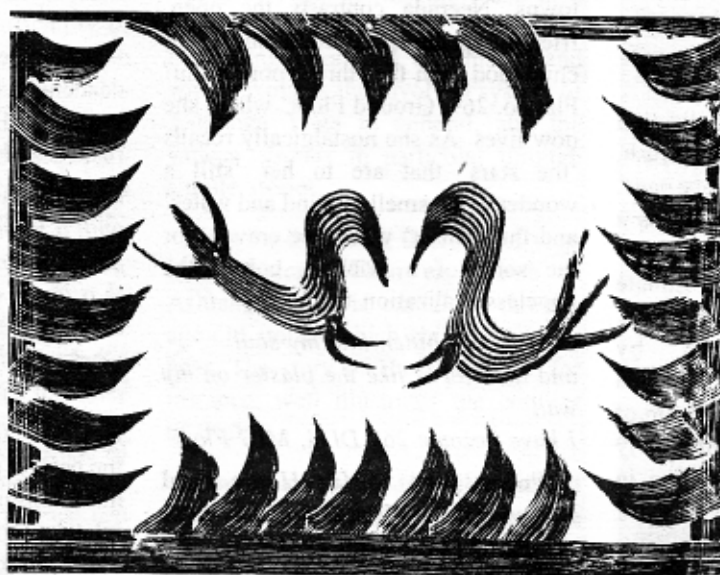
Imam considers the art of the women-painters of Hazaribag as the genesis of *adivasi* art in general, and rock-paintings of prehistoric man, more specifically. It describes huge wall paintings and decorations, symbols of ritual both sacred and secular, the decorative symbols of Diwali, and marriage room or khovar. Parallelisms between these symbols and those of earlier times is carefully drawn, and pointed out (as do other *adivasi* groups elsewhere in India) that the women painters refer to their art as writing — *likhana*. This is perfectly valid within the context of oral - folk - traditions widely prevalent in India, because symbols, designs and images of wall paintings are language signs that predate written script and provide insights into many other sensitivities of man which has been lost by urban modern man. Imam's vision is thus a

and shades of mud which is scraped away to produce traditional design patterns — humans, animal, bird, fish and vegetable forms and other symbols — on the walls. The work is expressive in its freeness of style of sacred and social tradition, continued by women who play an important role in the continuity of tradition, especially reflecting *adivasi* emotional and artistic consciousness which forms the base of the so-called 'classical' traditions. The idea of bridal caves one can guess was probably a development of the post-cave dwellers, who painted their mud huts with symbols found in caves and rock-shelters found earlier which are now associated with sacred marriage symbols. The author then describes Soharae and Ganju art tradition at the end of the book and suggests tentatively some form of similarities between all three in terms of styles and symbols of decoration on house walls by the Mundas and the Santhals. In fact, he

traces some links in style and subject handling to the Aboriginal art of Australia.

Imam's book is important since it has allowed the *adivasis* to feel proud of their artistic expressions, of their cultural heritage; their close association with the natural environment which modern man needs to be with so urgently. It has focused on the need for a regeneration of *adivasi* traditions, keeping away economic exploitation from their doorsteps albeit considering the galloping

away of consumeristic values this may sound a hopeless hope. However, when the work attempts archaeological reconstructions comparing signs with Harappan, Sumerian and Egyptian cultures, there are too many pitfalls in apparent resemblances. That requires considerable caution, as diffusion and migration as explanations will not suffice. It may also be pointed out that the binding of such a valuable documentation is poor — pages coming apart. There could also have been more



Khovar painting from Hazaribagh, Bihar

holistic vision in viewing *adivasi* art, the living tradition that provides cultural continuity of this artistic expression. Many other artifacts — troughs for cattle, seals of sandstone and of copper and other objects — have been studied for seeking parallels with Sumerian, Egyptian and Indus valley cultures.

The painting by women, is actually carried out by a *sgraffito* method, which is called 'Khovar comb painting', using several layers of different kinds

coloured photographs than just on the cover page, which would have highlighted the aesthetic sense far better than the black and white illustrations given now. However, all this need not distract us from the value of the work given by the Imams. ❧

Dr. S.C. Malik is an anthropologist and has carried out work in Central, Western and Northern India for the study of early man and his cultural remains. His major contribution is in developing multi-disciplinary methodologies in the framework of philosophical anthropology. He is currently a UGC Professorial Research Scientist, Nehru Museum and Library.

BONSAIS

AFFILIATED EAST WEST PRESS

PRICE Rs. 90/-

NEERADA SURESH

KAVITA A. SHARMA

Bonsai, a sensitive collection of poems by Neerada Suresh, breathes grace in every page. Like the poetry within, the cover is a beautiful painting entitled *Shakti* by Jatin Das, symbolizing the innate enduring inner strength of women. The scholarly foreword by K. Satchidanandan places Neerada Suresh's poems firmly in the stream of feminist poetry in India and particularly in the tradition of women writing in English.

What is striking about Neerada's poetry is its honesty, simplicity and its intense personal note. In her ability to speak directly and forcefully from her heart, lies her strength. It combines the control of language and the use of telling metaphors and symbols to give the poems immense richness of texture and feeling. The issues explored are familiar ones: the burden of patriarchy, the fossilized social conventions and customs, pressures of modern urban life, a woman's search for identity, the place of creativity in her life and family relationships with their outdated preconceptions. The world

evoked is the life of a middle class urban working woman. There are no climbs to extraordinariness. As Neerada says in *Self Introduction*

I am

*an ordinary non-person
with a creativity confined
to a home and children,
to a juxtaposing of carpets and curios
labelling books, tying up shoe laces.*

It is an ordinariness to which every woman can respond. Through it struggles up the extraordinary creative talent which cannot be suppressed. Writing becomes

*a bold exercise
all over the house
half way through the night's menu
children's assignments
and shuttling between
answering the door bell
and a telephone call*

The creative stifling corresponds to the cramped spaces in metropolitan towns. Neerada contrasts the open, friendly spacious environment of her childhood with the 'three room affair/ Flat no. 269, Ground Floor' where she now lives. As she nostalgically recalls 'the stars' that are to her 'still a wonder', 'the smell of wind and water' and the 'sunset' when she craves 'for the song of a cricket', comes the hopeless realization that

*Bricks have bitten into my soul
and discolored like the plaster on my wall*

I have become 269 DDA, MIG Flats

Poems like *My Home* and *Renovation*, recalling the carefree rural childhood, are juxtaposed with the harsh realities of metropolitan life. In *Encroachment*, the bird building a nest in a mail box becomes a powerful metaphor not only for urban environmental degradation but also for the corresponding degeneration in human relationships leading to alienation and isolation. A time will come when the children will ask "and what is rain".

The degradation of human relationships occurs on two planes: personal and societal. The charity to the leper and the guilty giving of a rupee to a child beggar as the narrator

Bonsais

NEERADA



of *Traffic Hazards* speeds off 'to get spaghetti and chicken for my children' portray the uneasy conscience which must be provided a sop for survival.

But the metropolis causes the deadening of the soul in more ways than one. Even love-making must be rushed and mechanical

*to fast forward through it all
with a spent up semi-wakeful
passive dummy
that lay in a live worry
over the next day's menu
work schedule
children's grades.*

However, there is no romanticizing of the past. If urban industrialized society has taken its toll over human relationships it was patriarchy and the hypocrisy built up over the years that caused the imbalance in family relationships in the first place. On the one hand, economic liberalization and marketing have ignored the reality of today's

*....real woman
the toiling mother of two
with chipped nails,
sagging breasts
and streaked hair
relegated to the kitchen
to cook proper 'desi' meals.*

in favour of the TV ads which beguile Indian males with the fantasy

of a

*drawing room seductress
with a life's mission
of turning out toasts
two-minute noodles*

On the other hand, patriarchal values marginalize women firmly. The husband's infidelity is to be ignored

*O! men will stray
the woman should brave it all
was all*

*my mother-in-law could say
adding*

*light a lamp and pray
for the longevity of his life.*

Of course, mother-in-law knows best.

Neerada's sensitivity is amply evident in her response to the son growing up to manhood, the subconscious rivalries between the father and the son while the mother is caught between the two. The rootlessness of migration is brought out in poems like *Metamorphosis* and *My Cousin's Wedding*. The narrator can take no part in the artificiality of 'Malyalee entrants/ at clannish meetings.' At the same time she is also disappointed with the invasion of the metropolitan ways at her cousin's wedding by which short shrift is given to old customs and tradition in the name of modernity.

Yet Neerada's poetry is not an unmitigated cry of anguish from a subaltern position. *Talking on the Telephone* testifies to her humour and ability to laugh at the ironies of life. At the end, one is left with the sense of quiet dignity and enduring strength with which the 'bonsai-d' women can still hope to

*...survive perhaps
dreaming of bursting
into swanking trees
swaying to the winds
jostling for the sun
in a dense wood. ☞*

*A selection of Neerada's poems
have been included in our poetry
section.*

Kavita A. Sharma is Professor of English at the Hindu College, Delhi University. She is a prolific writer, feminist champion and education activist.

YOGA FOR CHILDREN

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PRICE: Rs. 125

SWATI AND RAJIV CHANCHANI

SWATI GUPTA

Yoga for Children was conceived from a metaphor like 'stretch like a dog' which was used by the authors to encourage children to improve a pose.

Swati and Rajiv Chanchani have been practicing and teaching yoga under the guidance of Yogacharya BKS Iyengar since 1975. Currently they teach at Doon School and Welham Girls High School in Dehradun.

This beautifully presented book brings to life the lost and forgotten world of yoga. It fills the place of a much needed manual which is interesting, organised, informative and which explains the involved system of Ashtanga Yoga in general, and the various *asanas* in particular through simple stories.

It starts by tracing the roots of yoga in mythology. Then each limb of Ashtanga Yoga is explained through age-old stories which children love to hear. The story of Harishchandra, for instance, well illustrates the concept of truth.

Asanas are spaced in well organised categories, according to their type (inverted/standing/twisting poses). Stick figures and pictures create an instant visual rapport with the child. A legend related with the *asana* links it to the world of fantasy and imagination. The Sanskrit name of the *asana* is broken down and explained to facilitate pronunciation and comprehension. A clear list of do's and don't's and benefits is given. It also features labelled diagrams to encourage a basic understanding of the human body.

The book lifts *asanas* from a mundane perspective to a more joyful, easy to relate, everyday world. The unique and imaginative quality of

asanas is emphasised in the book. The play element is strong and is given to moving at the child's pace.

The book claims that *Yoga for Children* is certainly one way to ensure that our children grow up healthy and happy. I firmly endorse this view and strongly recommend this book for all those concerned with the well being of children. ☞

Swati Gupta is doing her Psychology Honours, 2nd Year, at the Lady Shri Ram College, New Delhi.

MUST READS

DANGER SCHOOL

Schools today deprive children of their childhood, substitute work for play, stunt creativity and fill young, fresh minds with sterile, boring inspiration. In cartoon form, Danger School looks at the real threat that the modern school poses to children's sanity and parental hopes.

The Other India Press Pp.100 Rs.60

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In this stunning new book, Dr. Manu Koithari and Dr. Lopa Mehta delve into the biological and medical data on death and come up with a readable, amply reassuring account of disease, dying and death that is bound to make readers sit up and think.

The book questions the rationale of western medical science, debunks the mindset - fear of death - so assiduously created by medical men and drug companies and teaches people to live life and meet death with abundant cheer.

The Other India Press Rs.75

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SECOND HEADS & TAILS

In this sequel to her earlier book Heads and Tails, Maneka Gandhi - India's best known supporter of animal rights continues her campaign against animal abuse. From heartwarming tales of animals she proceeds to the story of slaughter houses in various Indian cities. The book covers a varied range of issues. The second half of the book is dedicated to the promotion of vegetarianism.

The Other India Press Rs.75

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HELPING HAND

For all you animal lovers and especially those involved in animal welfare and rights, here's a publication to warm the cockles of your heart.

KARE, a Delhi-based activist group has published this Directory of Animal Welfare Organisations in India. Divided into five sections, the directory, besides offering a statewide, detailed list of animal welfare organisations in India also covers a host of issues like law, animals in our daily lives, circuses, zoos, animals in medicine, science and religion, slaughter houses, vegetarian awareness programmes, even vegetarian recipes for pets!

The first section deals with National and Delhi Animal Protection Laws while the second details Delhi laws, landmark judgements in animal-related cases, a list of veterinary hospitals, vets' addresses, emergency services and police stations.

The book is enlivened with delightful cartoons featuring animals.

Here is a comprehensive, painstakingly researched and thoughtfully compiled ready reckoner that should be of considerable use to individual pet owners, animal welfare organisations all over India and all those interested in bettering the lives of animals.

If you are interested in acquiring this useful book, write to KARE at: M-39 Main Market, Greater Kailash I, New Delhi-110 048

Researched, compiled and edited by Camellia Satija.

Published by: KARE (Kindness to Animals and Respect for Environment) Rs.50

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TOURISM UPDATE

NINA RAO

Commoditisation and
Commercialisation of Women in
Tourism: Symbols of Victimhood.

Gender discrimination in India today is being presented as an aberration in the inexorable drive towards development. Despite the attempts of the government to promote the view that the new economic thinking is gender sensitive, the ideological and cultural changes that are coming in the wake of the process of globalisation are denying the space that women in India had created through their struggles and through their participation in several significant mass movements.

The impact of tourism on gender has only recently been studied by social scientists, although the cultural construction of gender, in combination with the variable of the race is only now being looked at. In the area of tourism studies this approach is likely to raise many new issues, as the issue of gender and race have added insights to so many other policy issues. Tourism activity and promotion offer a very fruitful area for the application of the variables of gender and race to study the negative impacts of Tourism in relation to the distribution of power, social privilege and the socialisation of gender roles in tourism processes. The legitimacy for looking at gender and race derives from our context in India where we see variations in both the responses and the experiences to the dominant (global) power structure we are trying to adapt to. In seeing the impact of tourism on women and their victimisation through commoditisation and commercialisation, we see the variables of gender and race as significant not only as independent variables acting on tourism but also as inter-related and being affected by tourism.

Given the fact that travel has been differentially accessed through the ages, it is only in the twentieth century that women as travellers have had an impact on tourism. Tourist behaviour

expressed in graffiti, litter, the uncouth tourist (ethno-centric behaviour) and subjectivity and representation of women in the brochure or tourism advertising, all point to concepts that are applicable to men alone. Women travellers described as 'well-bred' and 'respectable' fall in the category of privileged women or women as extensions of their missionary, coloniser or executive male family heads. As a result there has been very little emphasis on the needs of women as tourists either in terms of amenities or creating destinations and attractions for them. Similarly in the travel trade the gendered nature of employment is never stressed. The issue of sexual harassment is particularly severe, given the sexualised environment-escape, adventure, romance, which remove constraints in the employee-tourists relationships. The clothes and submissive behaviour insisted on by employers encourage the view that respectable women are tourists whilst fallen women are barmaids and chambermaids. Here race also adds to stereotypical connotations.

In the naming and framing process of tourist advertising also, we see a ritualistic emphasis on gender and racial stereotypes of the tourists as the idle rich white population of western Europe and the USA for whom India is programmed as the Royal Orient, with all its feudal patriarchal representations. It is now becoming increasingly important to look at such representations as expressions of sexism and racism, just as activists did when they forced Air-India to retract the "Bare India" poster featuring a bikini-clad woman to promote Goa.

Within the family there is a change in the traditional division of labour. Women either carry the double burden of bread winner and home-maker, creating tensions due to male/female roles being reversed. In rural areas women head households without access to resources and the younger generation

gets drawn into sex or drug tourism, resulting in a power shift to the younger generation but on patriarchal terms as in Garhwal and Manali. In the past few months we have seen several reports of young men and women acting as couriers of the drug mafia being apprehended by the police.

In the area of environment we see the emergence of safari tourism as a socially constructed form of hegemonism. Their fuel and water needs which were met through forest produce or their grazing chores have become onerous since the notification of sanctuaries and the zoning patterns being implemented to ensure free access to the tourist.

Tourism, through commoditisation, legalises the marginalisation of gender, since the national tourism industry is dependent on and performing a function within an international framework. We can therefore conclude that economic marginality, racial inequality and unequal gender relations are particularly fertile grounds in the construction of tourism, since many promoters of tourism consider tourism an apt vehicle for creating opportunities for such problems to be resolved. However Foucault considers commoditisation and commercialisation as a focus of control to strengthen larger hierarchical systems which aim to institutionalise racism, sexism as social class privileges rather than to seek salvation for the victims. The solution lies in identifying and locating the source of gender crimes and building a movement of solidarity both within and without in the broadest way possible. ❧

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Through Glasses Darkly . . . The Tourist as a Juggler in a Hall of Mirrors

TOM SELWYN

'For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.'

Corinthians 13:12

At a time of the year when there is much evidence of both the Bible and tourist brochures, I would like to suggest that in some senses tourist brochures and religious texts belong to the same genre. My specific proposition is that rather in the same way that converted Corinthians are exhorted to look at the image of God, so contemporary tourists are invited by the brochures to look at themselves 'face to face' in mirrors in which can be seen images of other people and their natural and/or cultural surroundings. The further suggestion is that the images and reflections emerging from the tourist's hall of mirrors are used to think about certain basic features of the social and cultural life of both the people of tourist destinations as well as that of tourists themselves.

Speaking personally and ethnographically, the line of thought explored here came from two sources. The first was Pepe's Bar on the Paseo Maritima in Palma, Mallorca, where, one day I met a morosely articulate Dutch tourist who told me that he worked in an abattoir in Ireland. Both his salary and conditions of work were mediocre, he said, and he looked forward to the two weeks in the year when he could come to Magalluf and 'feel human' again. The second was a recent seminar on the anthropology of tourism at which the story was told of a young single mother who, during the course of bringing up a child in London without a partner, had taken a holiday in an expensive hotel in the Caribbean in which she had confided



to a friend, she had, as she put it, 'found herself' again. The questions, both of which have a religious flavour, which concern us are what is actually meant by 'feeling human' and/or 'finding oneself' in this context.

My own approach to these questions may appear more flippant than it is intended to be, namely that the tourist, ensconced in his or her hall of mirrors, finds his or her 'humanity' and/or 'self' by becoming a juggler, a juggler of some extremely basic and familiar terms and ideas, including individual, collective, self, other, nature, culture, knowledge and myth.

Picture the tourist looking at the world 'out there' (i.e. at the natural and cultural world of the destination) as if it consisted of four mirrors. Give these mirrors names: 'cultural knowledge, myths of culture.' Imagine further that the tourist looks at each of these mirrors to reflect some basic components of his or her 'own world', including the world 'back home'. Given our argument that the first of these pairs of mirrors reflects knowledge and the second pair reflects myths - about the tourist's position in his or her own society and about the nature of the self in that society in both cases - we may give names of the mirrors themselves: 'collective knowledge, individual knowledge, myths about individuals and myths about collectives'.

One implication of all this is that the tourist appears as a sort of philosopher-juggler, juggling with questions and issues which are at heart

religious, has been one of the major themes in the anthropology of tourism since the early days. There are also many differences, of course, not least that tourists, by definition, 'think about' the kinds of relations we have been discussing 'playfully' - in bars and discos, hotels and restaurants, beaches and swimming pools and so on. Furthermore, in a western, secular world in which there is increasing pressure to devalue the essential pastime of thinking about, and playing with these ideas, it is small wonder that people feel the urgent need regularly to become tourists. ☼

Contours is the quarterly newsletter of the Ecumenical Coalition on Third World Tourism. The Coalition aims to focus on tourism and the impact it has on Third World countries. It encourages an awareness of the role of tourism in development models, provides opportunities for people affected by tourism to express their views, denounces unfair practices in tourism, stimulates and enables research and action for justice in tourism. This article is excerpted from a longer article in Contours.

"... If you want a people to preserve their culture, you've got to make them feel proud of themselves. You've got to make them feel that they can hold their heads up in the world. If people do not have confidence in themselves, they will lose their culture because they will think other people are better. If they're poorer, if they have to depend on foreigners for a little trickle of whatever is going in, then they will lose confidence in themselves... if they lose confidence in themselves, they will no longer value their own culture".

Aung San Suu Kyi.

(An excerpt from a meeting with a foreign journalist)

The Nationalist (1942)

This is the land of fratricide,
Of hate and creed challenging creed.
Clan to clan, on every side,
Our hordes are growling in their greed,
Clan to clan and man to man,
The Hindu and the Muslim - all
Are playing with God's glorious plan,
Striving to build a China wall,
Parting the friends that, yesterday,
Together used to live and pray.

Sorrow, need and desperation
Have besieged us country-wide.
In one unending degradation
They have hurled our glory and pride -
The spirit of our ancient life,
The soul that saves, the hand that heals,
Impelling us to dire strife
And to a servitude that feels
Its own debasement to the bone,
Bound to an imperial throne.

Hell-fire, poison and bloodshed,
The ethics of the beast of prey,
Oppression, wrong and constant dread
Have enveloped the world today.
Black and white and king and slave -
These are the divisions we own.
We count each neighbour as a nave
And go through life alone, alone.
Undoing, we are thus undone,
Forgetting that mankind is one.

History confirms our fate
Saying: the world was ever thus.
A few sons of the earth were great
And joyous in their overplus
Of soul. But cunning had usurped
Their place and triumphed in their name.
Parrot-wise maxims it chirped
But outdid hell with deeds of shame;
Delivering Sermons on the Mount
That must be taken with discount.

Life today is thus a quest
For gold-electrons lost in sand;
A feeble hand that without rest,
Lifts loads giants cannot stand;
Bedecking of a corpse all mangled
Upon a sacrificial fire;
This was the world's life yesterday
And may be, who knows? Till doomsday.

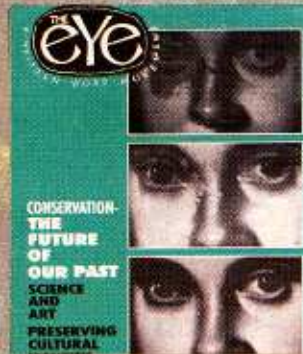
But Turth is Truth to the end of Time
Though the whole world runs amuck.
Evil may be in its prime
The child of chance, the lord of luck.
Whether Truth triumphs and soars high
Or falls crumbling into dust,
Her humble servant I will live and die,
In her alone I put my trust,
Carving the God-given bamboo shoot,
With many stops into a flute.

Vinayak Krishna Gokak

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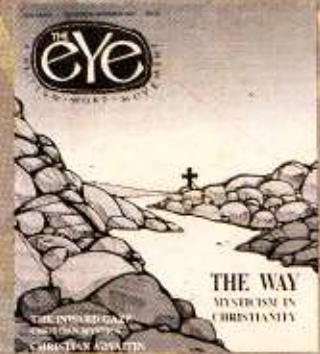
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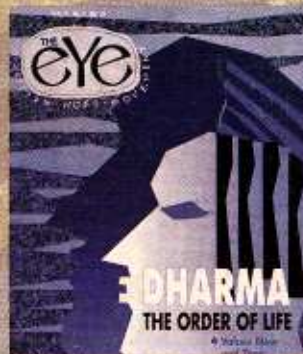
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